THE
Hudson
REVIEW

'he Very Fall of the Sun

a novel by

Samuel Hazo

's *by* OCTAVIO PAZ, RICHMOND LATTIMORE,
AEL VAN WALLEGHEN, FREDERICK MORGAN,
ESPMARK, HANS CARL ARTMANN.

's *by* MARVIN MUDRICK, WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD,
N YOUNG, PETER GLASSMAN.

E XXIX, NUMBER 3 • AUTUMN 1976 • $2.50 PER COPY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HARVARD FEATURES

A History of Modern Poetry

From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode
David Perkins

"It will unquestionably be *the* authority in its field . . . the first and only large-scale history of British and American poetry of the last eighty years . . . a very substantial, illuminating, and humane book." — Douglas Bush
Belknap Press $17.50

The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol

Simon Karlinsky

Through his revelation that Gogol was homosexual rather than asexual, Karlinsky throws completely new light on Gogol's life, and his work.
$14.00

Imagining a Self

Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England
Patricia Meyer Spacks

These unexpected pairings of novels and autobiographies offer new perspectives on familiar and unfamiliar works.
$15.00

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bloodhounds of Heaven

The Detective in English Fiction
from Godwin to Doyle
Ian Ousby

Ousby investigates the detective in fiction – from Caleb Williams to Sherlock Holmes – and solves the mystery of his transformation from rogue to hero.
$10.00

Shakespeare • Aspects of Influence

G.B. Evans, Editor

Ten essays devoted to various manifestations of Shakespeare's influence from the early seventeenth century to the present.
Harvard English Studies, 7
$12.50 cloth; $3.95 paper

Cavafy's Alexandria

Study of a Myth in Progress
Edmund Keeley

"A most penetrating, perceptive appreciation of this supremely memorable and haunting poet."
– Mary Renault
$11.50

English Romanticism and the French Tradition

Margery Sabin

Margery Sabin demonstrates that national traditions of thought and language had a determining influence throughout the Romantic period.
$15.00

Harvard University Press Cambridge, Mass. 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editors:

FREDERICK MORGAN
PAULA DEITZ

Managing Editor:

MARIANNE T. CLAY

Editorial Assistant:

CECILIA MARINO

Advisory Editors:

HAYDEN CARRUTH
ROGER SALE
WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Associate:

EDMUND T. DELANEY

Contributing Editors:

JOHN SIMON, *Theatre*
VERNON YOUNG, *Film*
CHARLES W. MILLARD, *Art*
MARCIA B. SIEGEL, *Dance*
ROBERT S. CLARK, *Music*

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. It is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines and of COSMEP, and is indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Index. Book reviews are indexed in Book Review Index.

Subscription $9.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $10.00. Single copy $2.50. Special rate for bulk orders. U. S. distributor: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J. 07110. Subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Back issues and reprints of Volumes I—XXVII available from AMS Press, Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003. Microfilms of Volumes I—XXVII available from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editors.

Printed in the United States of America. Second Class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and at additional mailing Offices.

Registered U. S. Patent Office.

Copyright © 1976 by The Hudson Review, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOLUME XXIX
NUMBER 3
AUTUMN 1976

THE Hudson Review

CONTENTS

It's All Discretion in the Isolation Ward; ". . . But Without Love, I Was Nothing"; An Artist's Journey to the Grave; The Director of the Environment's Secret Journey; They Don't Even Take Shelter; Journey Home to Oblivion (*poems*). Translated by Robin Fulton. KJELL ESPMARK 331

Petrifying Petrified (*poem*). Translated by Eliot Weinberger. OCTAVIO PAZ 338

Night Travel; Riviera Railway; The Islands; Former Residence (*poems*) RICHMOND LATTIMORE 343

Arizona Movies (*poem*) MICHAEL VAN WALLEGHEN 346

Autobiographies (*poem*) FREDERICK MORGAN 351

Iroquois September; Unswerving Road West; Encounters in the Woods (*poems*). Translated by Derk Wynand. HANS CARL ARTMANN 355

The Very Fall of the Sun (*novel*) SAMUEL HAZO 361

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

More Poetry Matters	WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD	453
The Late Lamenting Wyndham Lewis	VERNON YOUNG	464
Mad Dogs and Anglo Shrinks	MARVIN MUDRICK	471
Solidarity with the Solitary	PETER GLASSMAN	476

Notes on Contributors 475

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poetry

THE POETRY CENTER, 92 ST. YM-YWHA

$20 Membership

admits you to evenings with

Louis Simpson
Muriel Rukeyser
William Meredith
Allen Ginsberg
Robert Bly
David Ignatow
Marge Piercy
Jack Gilbert
Robert Lowell
John Ashbery
Carolyn Forché
Richard Hugo
Thom Gunn
Norman Mailer
Hortense Calisher
Larry Woiwode
Grace Paley
Jules Feiffer

Anthony Hecht/Frank Glazer: An Evening of Poetry and Music

The State of American Poetry Today: A Panel

Valentine's Day Program: Love Poems

Ian Richardson: Readings from the works of many poets

Harold Clurman: Morning Lectures on Theatre

In addition, Poetry Workshops will be taught by Muriel Rukeyser, Jean Valentine and Audre Lorde, and a Fiction Workshop will be taught by Bel Kaufman.

at the Y

1395 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NYC, 10028

Write or phone (212-427-6000, ext. 711) for our brochure.

Member of Federation of Jewish Philanthropies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coming in

THE HUDSON REVIEW

JOHN GARDNER:
Moral Fiction

EUGENE K. GARBER:
The Host—a story

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS:
Women's Stories, Women's Selves

INSCRIPTS

Samuel Hazo

The author of *The Very Fall of the Sun* has written three narrative prose poems which are mythic and elemental while being intensely personal. Samuel Hazo has immersed himself in the lives of three 20th century individuals, each of whom is forced to confront the basic life-death dilemma of existence.

OHIO UNIVERSITY PRESS
Athens
Ohio 45701

Cloth $8.00
Paper $3.75

"I really didn't enjoy it."
—*Janet Brown, Brookline, MA.*
"I enjoyed it immensely. There is something of a sensibility akin to Grace Paley's at times. The authority of the prose is extraordinary."
—*Arnold Krupat, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville*
"I find it fascinating."
—*Len Webster, West Midlands, England*
"Personally, I can say that I could have written half of your book, not because I have your talent, but only because I feel, think and believe almost everything you have put into words so beautifully."
—*Ginette Cassara, New York*
"I was captivated."
—*Edith Fels, Philadelphia*
"Only thing I objected to was the difficulty I had keeping the haphazardly introduced characters straight. But even here some came out beautifully developed. All in all, I must admit you are a writer of considerable talent."
—*Morris K. Jacobson, Rockaway, NY*
"Its intricate structure and delicate texture make rigorous and delightful reading."
—*David Wing, El Cajon, CA.*
"It wasn't fun and games. I can see how lots of people wouldn't understand it. It was very intelligent, and most people aren't."
—*Diane Steen, Seattle*

I THINK
I MAY PAINT
THE HOUSE
IN AUGUST

Innovative fiction.

Want to read it?

Send check or money order, $5.95 hardcover or $2.95 softcover, plus 60 cents for packaging and mailing, and I'll send it to you.

VICKY DRAHAM
3712 Sunset Beach N.W.
Olympia, Washington, 98502

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

James Dickey's The Zodiac

is the first major long poem by one of America's best-known poets, winner of the National Book Award in Poetry for *Buckdancer's Choice*. $6.00 (paperbound, $2.95)

Albert Goldbarth's Comings Back

extends the dazzling range of "one of the great word-magicians of our time . . . a literary banyan — strongly rooted, widely-branching, and forever putting down new trunks from the branch-tips."—*Beloit Poetry Journal*. Paperbound, $4.95

The New Collected Poems of Robert Graves

is the ultimate Graves collection; at eighty, the stormy giant of English literature has created his own retrospective collection of a lifetime of love poetry. With biography in Profile and photographs. $10.00

Sarah Appleton's The Ladder of the World's Joy

celebrates the virtue of joy in a new collection by a poet whose book, *The Plenitude We Cry For*, was called "a remarkable piece of work . . . fresh, personal, unrhetorical . . ."—*Denise Levertov*. Paperbound, $4.95

Poetry from
DOUBLEDAY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Georgia Review

The Georgia Review
Thirtieth Anniversary
Fall 1976

Essays

"Poetic Crossing: Rhetoric and Psychology" by Harold Bloom
"The Falkners and the Fictional Families" by Joseph Blotner
"Explanation and Conviction in Godard: *The Married Woman*" by Robert Boyers
"The Aesthetics of Astonishment" by Peter Brooks
"The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy *Before* Linguistics" by Jacques Derrida
"Fashions in Nudity" by Anne Hollander

Fiction

"My Real Estate" by Max Apple

Poems by Turner Cassity, Alfred Corn, Daryl Hine, Daniel Hoffman, Richard Howard, James Merrill, Frederick Morgan, and Howard Moss

Graphics by Libby Bailey

Reviews by T. Daniel Kelly, J. D. McClatchy, Wesley A. Morris, and Ronald Paulson

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Please enter my subscription to *The Georgia Review* for _____1 year ($3.00; Foreign $3.50) _____2 years ($5.00; Foreign $6.00), beginning with the _____ issue.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Zip Code: _____

The Georgia Review, edited by John T. Irwin and published quarterly at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602.

The Georgia Review is not available at bookstores. It can be obtained only by subscription.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW DIRECTIONS

DAVID ANTIN/TALKING AT THE BOUNDARIES
Pioneering collection of spontaneous improvised "talk poems"—philosophic inquiries by a brilliant, witty poet, art critic, teacher. *Cloth*, $11.95; NDP388, $3.95

ANTHOLOGY/NEW DIRECTIONS 33
An eloquent spectrum of new and varied prose & poetry. $12.00; NDP419, $3.95

MARTIN BAX/THE HOSPITAL SHIP
Visionary and sardonic first novel about a medical mercy ship confronted by a global catastrophe. $7.95; NDP402, $3.95

FREDERICK BUSCH/DOMESTIC PARTICULARS: A FAMILY CHRONICLE
13 interrelated fictions trace with acuity and warmth the effect of our time's major events on three generations of an urban American family. $11.95; NDP413, $3.95

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI/WHO ARE WE NOW?
Ferlinghetti's 7th book of verse—31 new poems capped by his extraordinary "Populist Manifesto." $6.50; NDP425, $1.95

MICHAEL McCLURE/GORF
Poet McClure's satirical, mythical play. Illus. $8.50; NDP416, $1.95

TOBY OLSON/THE LIFE OF JESUS
An unabashed and winning "autobiographical" first novel—"a rare work—alluringly erotic, imaginative, witty and funny" (Diane Wakoski). $8.50; NDP417, $3.95

GEORGE OPPEN/COLLECTED POEMS
Work of "A master craftsman" (*Village Voice*) now available as ND Paperback NDP418, $3.75

OCTAVIO PAZ/EAGLE OR SUN?
New, definitive translation by Eliot Weinberger of Mexico's most distinguished poet's landmark book of short prose poetry. Bilingual. $8.50; NDP422, $2.95

EZRA POUND/THE COLLECTED EARLY POEMS
Definitive, comprehensive collection. Ed., Michael King; Intro., Louis L. Martz. Illus., notes, indexes. $22.50

KENNETH REXROTH/100 MORE POEMS FROM THE JAPANESE
Long-awaited sequel to *100 Poems from the Japanese*. Calligraphy. $7.50; NDP420, $2.95

LINDA WAGNER/INTERVIEWS WITH WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
"Speaking Straight Ahead"—a presentation of Williams's most important public statements. Intro., notes, index. $8.50; NDP421, $2.95

WISDOM SERIES
THE WISDOM OF THE JEWISH MYSTICS. Introductory selection by Alan Unterman. $6.50; NDP423, $2.45
THE WISDOM OF THE SUFIS. A representative anthology by Kenneth Cragg. $7.00; NDP424, $2.75

NEW DIRECTIONS 333 Sixth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10014

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Great Poetry Deserves Great Audiences

— WALT WHITMAN

True enough. We know great poetry when we encounter it. But where do we find the great audiences? We think you're out there, waiting . . .

Waiting for THE WALDEN SOCIETY's new Poetry-of-the-Month program. Ours is a bookclub with a twofold purpose: we want to expand the scope of contemporary American poetry and at the same time serve the individual reader.

Each month, we will highlight a new book of poetry from a major publisher, a book we expect will receive much attention in both literary and non-literary circles. Each book will be accompanied by a self-contained supplement about the poet and his or her work. WALDEN SOCIETY members may receive each selection at a 10 per cent discount while enjoying the convenience — and novelty — of poetry by mail. Selections of previously published books of poetry will be offered at even greater discounts.

We're presently seeking out the "great audience" for poetry we know is there. We cordially invite you to join us.

For membership information, write:

THE WALDEN SOCIETY

336 *Mountain Road* *Union City, New Jersey* 07087

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

KJELL ESPMARK

It's All Discretion in the Isolation Ward

Cannot remain in the abandonment
She lets herself be bedded in.
With her gleaming fragments of hands
she clings violently to the doctor.
Help me to break free from my life!
And help me to yield to what
no-one will name.
She presses her desolation close to his.
But the doctor pulls free, stiff with horror.
Scribbles on his pad; the agitated marks
deny her very existence.
She has fallen back on the bed
shaking with humiliation.
The nurse's glance begs indulgence.
Her hands take their refuge with the drip:
let promise after promise of life
sink into the withered arm
duty-bound to nothing.
We have routines for the body's disintegration.
The shard of pelvis is emptied of its pain
at a fixed hour. Fellowship
takes good care of the flesh's gleaming fragments
but shies away from the whimpering soul.
Alone she must break free
from the children's big colourless eyes
full of dread at the shining skin
and all the whispering void on the pillow.
She wanted to touch her death with their hands.
But the final thing they have in common is shyness.
Alone she must master the inconceivable wrath
that time after time takes the place of pain.
Alone she must free the withered grasp
on the bed-rail
and make her way over the water, dizzy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with steps made weightless by morphine.
She carries with her
only a pulsing memory of betrayal.

". . . But Without Love, I Was Nothing"

Lights off, the car sinks into
the forest road's thinning autumn, dis-
jointed traces of body-work in the gloom.
Like the shreds of a scrubbed rally poster
on a grubby cement wall. The lovers in the front seat
are about to dissolve in each other.
Her face open as if it saw God.
But her hands fumbling after his soul
find only dried flakes of sheet-plastic
stuck round the inside of his ribcage.
He is almost abstract, must beg life where it is.
She has it. All of her weightlessly heavy body
with her pulled-down bra and her back to the wheel
is a rescue operation. Of course love seeks its own.
She puts *her* name in his mouth again and again.
Blows *her* breath into his lungs.
But when he straightens out again, creaking,
he resumes his own form.
Who is he? The tongue against his temples
feels him ramifying out like pulses from a battery
a swarm of voices and Olympian faces
defining him to inaccessibility.
She submits to the contempt
if she can give him skin of her skin
and goes along with him for a time, skin in skin.
She forces her dread into the golden colloquy
his senses and memory lose themselves in.
An incomprehensible sucking language.
At last he begins to get heavy with sweet matter.
She gives him, breathless, denser breathings. Now
he comes towards her, a sough like the sixth day.
Her curved fragments receive his cry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But a cry aimed at many, or none!
She can't manage him.
When he has turned back to his eyes
when he has been given eyes to turn back to
he pays off his debt with a smile.
Then carefully frees himself of the particular
and still trembling lights a cigarette
untouchable in his little circle of light.
She has shuffled down for good
a humiliated negotiator
in no hurry to reach home.
Stares through the hazily immaterial windscreen
and sees only too clearly
all of the inconceivable darkness.

An Artist's Journey to the Grave

He defends himself despairingly in the open grave.
Shovel after shovelful of silence
falls over his face
creeps into his nose and senses
seeps through his open head
and rattling down slows his heartbeat.
He's talking, trying to persuade.
As if it were his life
to enable others to see
when they only think they see.
He tries to sit up
open his mouth to a scream:
I won't! I'm still alive!
I've lots still to do.
A shovel's emptied in his mouth
and scatters what was almost words.
Those standing in the place of the mourners
have stiff cancelled faces
with lilac stains in the gold. And smell awful.
They've gone rigid in mid-movement.
Since they can't hear him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there's no cry in his mouth.
Space with its heavy gilt coating
is quite deaf. The shapes round him
get ready to go. Set in order
their gold-leaf features and thoughts.
But their bliss is transparent;
a text is about
to emerge from the stained skin.
Their kingdom, these circles have another name!
In the silence that tumbles over him
over his parrying arms
he feels, with his mouth full of gritty silence,
insight approaching. But their deafness stops him.
For lack of response
he can't grasp what he almost senses.

The Director of the Environment's Secret Journey

One day in September—air pressure 1005 millibar—
he makes his way down into the future
just as King Alexander in the story
was lowered into the sea in a barrel of glass
(gloomily gazing out at the huge whale
and men at pasture in the deep's floating forests).
He must at last find out for himself
and put an end to the nuclear power squabble.
While the greasy lines run out
he sees through the bottle-green glass
the two deformed assistants at the windlass
exchanging a glance that turns his stomach
then shrinking to nothing.
He has down with him some borrowed experts
who thoughtfully formulate the opinions
their place in the dialogue prescribes.
Still nothing unsettling in the world outside the glass.
The phosphorescing cities are growing
largely according to plan.
A kind of terrace, it seems.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At least the vessel stops sinking.
But what in God's name is this!
Flat against the glass they stare into the absurd.
Faces like sparklers
here there.
A woman, close-to, wants to say something.
But her voice is an incomprehensible crackle.
With awkward gestures instead of hands
she seems to warn of something that can't be seen.
She has her children around her. As if they branched out
like a mycelium, uncheckable.
The travellers are afflicted by such trembling
their understanding comes loose in its sockets.
They gasp for words.
One of them hits on a phrase—"in a wider context . . ."
And that saves them. As soon as they have a tongue in their head
they can defend themselves against what they see.
Their language is a huge filter.
Now the sparkling souls outside the glass
can be allowed to witness. They're immediately simplified to
abstractions
and can be recognised as the calculation's negligible values.
A signal's given. And the vessel rises.
Their thoughts move more nimbly.
Soon they can see their boat and its green
bubbly twisted faces
which already feel they know
the pacifying report.

They Don't Even Take Shelter

What an endless procession towards the city.
Clowns, tinkers, swindlers, ragmen,
car dealers without cars, drunkards.
The glowing walls, the inexorable towers
in the distance are growing in the thoughts of all.
The heavenly sewage-smell already reaches them
twelve miles away. Sweeter than honey.
What do they hope for?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Work, a bundle of straw on the floor,
half a square metre for their life?
Meaningless.
For each step they take nearer the city
they must relinquish a piece of themselves.
They belong to under-history
where not even the *word* revolt exists.
The crowd is tight and thin like a Dürer engraving.
Around them crows circle
over colourless acres, waiting.
From wheels nailed up
on the posts along the road
they hear the parching cries of those
who tried to enter glory
on their own terms.
But the migrants don't look up.
Their muddy gaze hides
in the mud of the road.
Think with your feet!
One hardly dares even to glance at the distant walls
that must be trembling in the mist.
Each one of those pulsating bundles
counts itself worth at least
the coin we're born with in our fist.
But demands also a place in reality.
In their multitude they seem unconquerable.
Are always facing a headwind
are made for leaning forward.
The only colour they know is brown.
Those at the front, approaching the merciless gates
are already walking into their invisibility.

Journey Home to Oblivion

Under the Byzantine sky
shimmering in wet colours
he strips on the jetty
alone in the haze. Flashes, could be water.
He lays pain aside gently

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the warped flossy boards.
He loops onto the bracket meant for the boat-hook
his nerves' greying bast-clusters.
Lets his paralysed muscles
fall last in a heap on the jetty.
Then steps down into the fierce acids
which can wash away all that remains of his ego.
He once had a name. Now
he's giving up his place in the Scheme of Things.
Floating out from the scum of the senses
simplified as a grammatical example.
Won't serve further.
Doesn't wait for the words from the sky
that once made the pen jitter in his hand.
A monstrously reduced landscape
closer than on any retina
arches its summer over him.
A house so white it melts into the whitening sky.
A woman, sensed, as white.
He gives up this image too.
Thought it was the last
but is not rid of the bird in the haze
the bird too naked to have a name.
It's there not as a bird but as its strokes of melody
coils of long-since cancelled song. Stroke upon stroke
twisting in erased senses. Echoes of echoes.
He must be free!
Echoes of echoes of echoes. Away.
Then nothing more than meaninglessness
a meaninglessness so vast
it will contain many:
a gale of forgotten faces
open towards nothing.

[*Translated by Robin Fulton*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OCTAVIO PAZ

Petrifying Petrified

Deadland
Shadeadland cactideous nopalopolis
dusht bonestony mockedmire
empty socket
petrified fire
the sun did not drink the lake
the earth did not absorb it
the water did not vanish in the air
men were the executors of the dust
wind
swirled in the cold bed of fire
wind
chanted litanies of drought in the bed of water
wind
broken knife in the worn crater
wind
saltpeter whisper

Primers of sand
the language broke
the sun that came down with tongues of fire
split in two
the centrotal solaortasoul the soldonage
was a rain of scrap iron
slagheap of words
crushed screams

Shadeadland: shade/shaded + dead + land
cactideous: cactus + hideous + cactus
nopalopolis: nopal + polis
dusht: dust + ash
bonestony: bone + nest + stony (4 syllables)
mockedmire: mocked + mire mock—admire (4 syllables)
centrotal: central + total
solaortasoul: solar + aorta + soul
soldonage: solar + donor + age (rhymes, more or less, with "golden age")

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hoofmuz zlebridlehar nessbit
whining waning Cains
Abels in rubble
partisan assassins
pagan pedagogues
slick crooks
the woofs of the one-eyed dog
guide of the dead
lost
in the coils of the Navel of the Moon

Valley of Mexico
lips in eclipse
toothless pit
lava slobber
Rage's rotten throne
obstinate obsidian
petrified
petrifying
Rage
broken tower
tall as a scream
smeared breasts
furious face
greendry snotblood
Rage
nailed in a wound
ragerazor looknife
on a land of tines and spines

Circus of mountains
theater of clouds
balcony of sun
table of noon
ball-game of the constellations

hoofmuz zlebridlehar nessbit: hoof + muzzle + bridle + harness +bit
ragerazor: rage + razor rage—eraser (4 syllables)
looknife: look + knife

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bursting images
impaled images
the lopped hand leaps
the uprooted tongue leaps
the sliced breasts leap
the guillotined penis
over and over in the dust over and over
they trim the tree of blood
the intelligent tree

Dust of dissected images
The Virgin
crown of snakes
The Flayed
The Felled-by-Arrows
The Crucified
The Hummingbird
winged spark
flowerbrand
The Flame
who speaks with words of water
Our Lady
breasts of wine and belly of bread
oven
where the dead burn and the living bake
The Spider
daughter of air
in her house of air
spins light
spins centuries and days
The Rabbit
wind
carved in the mirror of the moon

Images
buried in the eye of the dog of the dead
fallen
into the overgrown well of origins
whirlwinds of reflections

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the stone theater of memory
whirling images
in the circus of the empty eye
swarms of flies
red green brown ideas
ideas ate the deities
deities became ideas
great bladders full of bile
evaporation of idols
discarnation of images
ideolized ideolatry
faceless names ideodeities
cannibal deities
ideas idiotic as deities
rabid dogs
dogs in love with their own vomit

We have dug up Rage
The amphitheater of the genital sun is a dungheap
The fountain of lunar water is a dungheap
The lovers' park is a dungheap
The library is a nest of killer rats
The university is a muck full of frogs
The altar is Chanfalla's swindle
The brains are stained with ink
The doctors dispute in a den of thieves
The businessmen
fast hands slow thoughts
officiate in the graveyard
The dialecticians exalt the subtlety of the rope
The casuists sprinkle thugs with holy water
nursing violence with dogmatic milk
The fixed idea gets drunk with its opposite
The juggling ideologist
sharpener of sophisms
in his house of truncated quotations
plots Edens for industrious eunuchs
forest of gallows paradise of cages

house of truncated quotations: *or* house of truncated assignations

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stained images
spit on the origins
future jailers present leeches
affront the living body of time
We have dug up Rage

On the chest of Mexico
tablets written by the sun
stairway of centuries
spiral terrace of wind
the disinterred dances
on the coils of the moon
anger panting thirst
panting thirst anger
the blind in combat beneath the noon sun
beating each other with rocks
the blind are beating each other
the men are crushing
thirst panting anger
the stones are crushing
within there is a water we drink
bitter water whetting thirst
where is the other water?

[*Translated by Eliot Weinberger*]

Notes

Stanza 1. The Valley of Mexico. From lake to desert through the work of man.
Stanza 2. Mexico City. Discord: the degradation of the word in ideology. *The one-eyed dog:* according to Nahuatl mythology, the dead on their journey through the hells were guided by a dead dog—Quetzalcoatl's double.
Navel of the Moon: one of the possible etymologies for Mexico. The lake was called Navel of the Moon.
Stanza 4. The Ballgame, besides being a sport, was a rite of astronomical significance: the battle of the stars.
Stanza 5. Allusions to various pre-Columbian gods and myths, and also to popular modern beliefs, especially the Virgin of Guadelupe (Our Lady with breasts of wine and belly of bread, oven where the living are created, pit where the dead are buried, etc).
Stanza 6. Myths, gods, images turned into ideology and journalistic notions.
Stanza 7. Modern Mexico. The businesses. The ideological struggle.
Stanza 8. The disinterred is Rage, the petrifying petrified.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Night Travel

Heave our bags up the high
steps, wrestle corridor and rack, col-
lapse briefly on cushions, and the train
slides into black, glides into its pitch
and roll, tries to soar (bird on rails), wheels
on in gathering speed, throwing
Italian names back into the dark, throwing switch
and points, lights, posto di blocco, discarded
stations, throwing a shatter of thoughts, throwing
our past, or our presence, away.

Here
we are again where we were, where
this has been going on year after year
when we weren't here (but how could it?) but now here
we are, with non-potable acqua, action the chase-
water and bat back the covercle, here in place
of our lives ago in a slot
of rails and time. What
are we here for? Searching forgetting escaping
here in the lurching
night as our progress from now to next throws
the names away behind us into what bin
of oblivion? Who knows. But here
where we've been, we are.

Riviera Railway

The nice conductor prayed people to be gentile
and let us into the compartment. They didn't. There were in fact
three persons, and two soldiers had their coats laid

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the window seats as they themselves stood in the corridor
and admired the view and blocked passage. It rained daylong.
We both had colds. Change at Florence, and change

again at Pisa. Arno swollen and angry,
no tower in sight, only the crowds. No food, no
diner, but we had buns saved over and a fiasco

of Chianti white. This made cocktails dinner port
and brandy as we stood in the back vestibule, next to
the double latrine and the kidney smell. Strung out

a long drizzled day, color of rain, standing
and waiting. Night now. Breaks in the rock-slot flashed us
snug harbors, rainy sea-view benches under the heel

of the train, lights green and red wet slipping
on the black. This is our life. Due at 8, on the stroke of
midnight reached Genoa and got off at the wrong station.

The Islands

It is true, true
there are islands
available where there is nothing
to do but breathe in
bright air, plunge in the blue
water. No, really, they are there
within reach and means. A small
fishing boat (cabin cruiser) will carry
you across to your little hotel
bikini pool mini bar. What more
do you want? (Except maybe undo
that anchored self that says no
it's all in your head, all
this Elysian jazz. You have
to be dead first). And all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the time those little boats
go, to and fro, the happy
swingers or swindlers go
to take
the bright air and blue
water at those islands which are
after all
there.

Former Residence

Roof shot with holes,
boards blinding
windows, lawn a waste
of broken concrete and
rubble, only the steel
ball and the terminal
crunch left to wait
and fear. That's all.
Here
we lived, ate
loved drank
had babies had friends had a
ball.
It's a crate, full
of smashed floors
lost nails, bruised slats,
dry pipes, dust, rats, the
place is full of frail
hopes, fond looks, blown
cools, fashions friends
festivities, sweets and
successors and now
silences. All ends.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MICHAEL VAN WALLEGHEN

Arizona Movies

1

Rosetta, her new boy friend
and all four kids
are going to the drive-in
down in San Manuel.

"One more beer," they tell the kids
"and then we'll go." The kids
want a quarter a nickel
another dime—the kids

are a pain in the ass
the movie is about a dog
and the boy friend wears glasses
baggy double-knit slacks

and a white belt. Rosetta,
on the other hand, is beautiful,
elegant, altogether sweet
in her new blue sweater

and when she reaches in her purse
to buy another round,
I spot her little silver gun.
"That's just in case," she says,

"just in case."

2

Sometimes
even in the middle
of the year's best movie

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you can hear coyotes
at the San Manuel Drive-In.

Tonight, they are far away
and merely barking at the moon . . .

but Rosetta tells me
that when they chorus close
and suddenly together

hysterical, high pitched, furious

it means something is dying
in the dark foothills
behind the shaky screen.

3

After the bad movie
Rosetta wants to finish off
what's left of the tequila
drop off the kids

and then go dancing . . . !

But I don't know about Fred.
I think Fred sells mobile homes—
convenient, air conditioned,
catastrophically fragile,

I pass them everyday
and try to imagine myself
living there: the tv on
all the kids at school

and Rosetta, just lying
on the couch, just watching,
through the picture window,
some Apache ghost dance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cavalry of thunderheads
advancing slowly out
from between Mount Lemmon

and a pigeon blue wing
of the Catalinas.

4

No one is dancing
up at Pop-A-Tops. No one
is speaking. The tv's on
and in the Merry Christmas

snow flaked mirror, Fred
is shooting pool. Rosetta,
on the other hand, shreds
her matches into tiny bits

then looking up, her look
slides sidelong into mine—
the tense, unsteady look
I think, of children

getting lost . . . but what
was it that I thought to say?
Something dumb, mindless
a remark about the movie

or at my best, to notice
on that long, small arm
her careful, bar-room bracelet
of pink and yellow straws.

Whatever it was, she answers
to the whole place—loud,
and before I say a word:
"Nope, I'm not dead yet"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the fuzzed up mirror
keeps still, stays quiet
as the slow blue echo
of a pistol shot.

5

Rosetta says she's 32
but Fred looks younger.
Fred's even younger partner
works the graveyard shift

at Magma Copper
and behind us all
the Falstaff clock
turns counter clockwise

towards eleven. "One more game,"
they tell Rosetta, "and then
we'll go." *The Lariat?*
The Hangman's Tree?

"Why not Rosetta's place?"
Fred's partner whispers.
A joke perhaps. But still
it's curious, frightening

that I should also hear
in the shy nylon whisper
of Rosetta's thighs
in the click of small ice

something dangerous, random,
confused as kitchens,
cupboards where the knives
are kept, bedrooms

in the Apache Trailer Court
with real bullet holes
above the door.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

6

Like Rosetta
I too hear voices.

Tonight, they are speaking
the frazzled language

of neon, the cindered
impossible language

of parking lots, static
and revolving lights . . .

but sometimes, it's Rosetta—
her voice still angry

clear, above the voices
of the graveyard shift

who slam their doors
like Fred or anyone

going off half drunk
to work tonight

in knee deep water
and the hot acidic dark

one full mile
underground.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREDERICK MORGAN

Autobiographies

1

I lay on my back in Portugal
the storks were flying over
  white green white
on their way from the Coto Doñana
  white white blue
numina enskied:

I watched them through the fingers of one hand.

2

I am up at five, have coffee, read my paper on the terrace—
at eight, close shutters and blinds: the rooms are sealed.
In a morning twilight (one window alone half open)
I do some writing at the cardinal's desk
then go out, take care of my errands and pay a few calls.
I like to get my work done before noon—

Have lunch at one, make love, and sleep till four
while down in the piazza the workmen are asleep
lying, their heads on their arms, full length on the pavement
and the little boys curl up in the shade of the columns.
The city sounds are muted; the air is still.
This is the quietest time.
                Soon after four
the seabreeze comes in and life begins again.
Tea on the terrace: the streets are filled with people.
The girls, always so charming, are wearing pink muslin this year

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and dinner seems to be pushed back later and later.
We seldom dine alone. It's a time for friends,
for candlelight—
cold chicken, a light white wine, fresh fruit and ices . . .

At night we sit out in the coolness, under stars.

3

I found the place at last—
twenty-five miles due west
of the humid capital:
an inconspicuous cluster of huts
in a small jungle clearing.
A brown man in fatigues
was patrolling, carbine ready.
Insects hummed.
I climbed into the branches
of a low tree, and waited.

Just after dark a storm broke—
solid rain like a lake overturned
flare after flare of sheet lightning—
I hunched, shifted my grip
and heard soon, under the thunder,
a dull groaning and clanking.
Trucks creeping down the rutted path
broke into the clearing—four of them.
They stopped, men jumped down,
others ran out from the huts
and after some shouting in Spanish
began the unloading.
I could see, by the intermittent glare,
the long thin crates that held the guns.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two nights later at the waterfront bar
the strip-teaser, to finish off her act,
thrashing naked on her back on the narrow stage
spread her thighs screaming and inserted a banana—
to the huge approval of the military.

4

Arrived at the foot of the Maiden:
glaciers, torrents
nine hundred feet in visible descent
and minute by minute avalanches falling
like thunder.

I gathered snow there,
crushed it to hardness in my hands
while sound of cowbells
rose from the remote pastures.
Saw no man. The air, distilled,
was sharper than on a January day at home.

And then the storm came on—
hail, thunder, lightning, all in their perfection
beautiful as the last day of the Eon,
the day of finished things.
I thought of other lives,
shaped sternly as my own—
subtle, austere, each imbued with its own finality.
Looked up through the hail:
the torrent's shape was curved over the rock
not mist nor water but something in between,
tail of a white horse streaming in the wind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

5

A narrow room with rush blinds
straw carpet
a table and mat—
the mind being calm and at ease
simple beauties gratify the eye
—as, behind the house, a grassy slope that goes down
to the river—
and common daily sounds delight the ear.

To hold to the simple present.
A meal of vegetables
soup of boiled greens, will do:
the mind, cleared of sediment,
resting on its emptiness
mastering the great principle—
shoes of coarse hemp
robes of coarse cloth
granting body such ease as it requires
until its day of death.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HANS CARL ARTMANN

Iroquois September

Summer comes upon the autumnal hunting grounds, the iroquois say, meaning bright september; at this time, they bring out their long trousers and woolen blankets from closet and shelf.

In the autumnal beyond, the totem animals differ from those in the estival here-and-now; a racoon for the cat of june, a foliate beaver for the yellow jackal of july, a moss puma for the little maritime ape of august.

In tree-house and wigwam, the given names are altered as of the first of september; the women adopt the men's, the men the women's; as of september, the men shiver, day by day the women grow warmer.

In the north, the mountain produces a white man who slowly jogs southward; with the coals of oak trees, the rangers heat their earthen huts; wherever one may turn, the tent spars of the nether world are bending.

On the large islands of the *northern lakes,* fires are lit, the chief wraps himself in the wolf-skin, the medicine man in the buffalo's fur.

Spirits and goblins inhabit the regions under the bark of trees, the woodpecker flies off, the bark-beetle curses, the empty nests come rustling down . . .

A jay is ceremonially revived with firewater, as demanded by an age-old ritual.

Barter is the only money at the time, dollars are placed in casks and hoarded for the following summer, a shot of gin is worth a dime.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Through the tunnel of his arched hand, the iroquois observes the path of the already fading solar disc—faster, if weakened, it goes on its usual way, it utters a proverb:

Raonhake atsennonnit aiahiheie saknaßirokon tahattesannaßikah etsanke tinnik tsinitsenri unneßenkanka!

In september, the question is suddenly raised among the hunters: is the lynx the brother of the moon, the badger the godfather of the pole-star, are the puma and ember-goose enemies of the sun?

Moments for a strong word from the shamans: whoever shows himself at midnight will come upon the thighs of the woman of the woods!

September is a travelling circus in the Red Man's life, prophecies and prognoses fly from ear to ear, necromancers and swindlers make a show of mightly exclamations and howghs.

Approaching from the sea at daybreak, an old eagle brings words that will prove understandable: *tsannakke tsannakke tsannakke tlinkit . . .*

All ears, the iroquois understands him, all eyes, the iroquois sees him, in the time for barter the available information is bartered and one goes among the people with the drum of cognition . . .

Unswerving Road West

An hour's drive from *Boston*, a house with a round number plate and the fascinating number eleven, a white wooden fence in front over which cream-coloured deer jump now and then, and pink-eyed unicorns.

My young aunt tells of drivers who become afraid because they suddenly see things—not lily-livers, no, but without exception people familiar with storm and rain, men in tweed and fine footwear.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My young aunt stands naked in the garden of her house and sprinkles the smooth-mowed lawn with a garden hose; a medium-sized aviary with assorted birds from the old as well as the new world is basking in the morning sun.

Should one reach the upper level of the road that leads west without swerving, then even from a distance he will catch sight of my young aunt's little property.

The house of my young aunt does not lie in the middle of the property, it stands right against the road that leads west without swerving; now and then, the old-fashioned strumming of a banjo can be heard in the early hours of evening.

Some ruminants love grazing among the flowers—their shadow changes according to the hour of the day, now dreamy, then bizarre, now formidable, then touching, according to the light of sun and moon.

I have no uncle, my young aunt is a single girl; to ask her why she has no husband I dare *not* ask.

The ruminants move more quietly than plunging streams, the captive birds sometimes scream at night like frightened children.

I don't think my young aunt can brew a tempest in her tea pot that can fell trees and strip roofs; many times I've drunk tea in her kitchen—it was ordinary tea.

Garden hose in hand, among her ruminants, my young aunt appears to the unsuspecting drivers—they think they are having daydreams.

Tempests arise in tea pots, to be sure, furious hails in common soup-tureens, whirlwinds in whiskey glasses, persistent rains and floods in ordinary milk cans, aridity and droughts in frying pans from the good old days.

Do sit down, Allan, my young aunt tells me, here's tea and home-made jam; the diffuse shadow of a long horn falls through

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the large window, the tea-water in the kettle on the log-fire is bubbling, a strong gust of wind blows the garden gate shut.

My name is extraordinarily easy to remember: I'm called *Allan Baxter,* and my young aunt is a few years younger than I.

Dr. Olfert Dapper insists that, in the year 1673, he saw a wild unicorn in the woods of *Maine*; there are travellers who can give accounts of mermaids, werewolves, maggoty elves and elfish maggots.

The home-made jam consists of fruits I'm not familiar with, the tea is good, the bread is fresh from the oven; thus the afternoons with my young aunt go by.

I know that I dream every night, but I can never remember my dreams upon waking; I always sleep like a dormouse, the worst thunderstorm could not rouse me from my deep sleep.

I am neither married nor in love, but feel as sexually balanced as a happy husband or a mistress' well-loved lover.

I dare not ask my young aunt how male unicorns spill their excess seed, how cream-coloured bucks survive the rutting season gently as falling beech leaves.

I dare not ask my young aunt for the names of the assorted birds in the aviary, birds with sad eyes that I pity somehow without knowing the why and the wherefore.

From the railing gate of the white wooden fence of my young aunt, the highest level of the road that leads east without swerving can be seen; there, a whirlwind reaching right to the sky is presently dancing; startled, the drivers drive in a wide curve across the lawn on both sides of the road.

Recently I told you my name, but now I can no longer remember what I'm called: I know only that I am the nephew, a few years older, of my young aunt, who is a few years younger; she stands naked on the smooth-mowed lawn of her property and calls the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gentle ruminants by names I have never heard before and which I will forget again immediately.

I remember that I owned a car once, a *de Soto,* in which I drove west along an unswerving road—it may well have been some time ago.

Encounters in the Woods

In the old days, people who have not seen one another for a long time meet in dense forests.

They keep encountering one another in immense forests, such as the *Celyddon* wood.

Or in the *Brecheliant* forest or in the forest of the *Bro Mee* on the gallic border.

Or at the petrified forest waste of *Numidia,* where the rain has been extinct for thousands of years.

No less on islands that surface or are visible only seldom (excluding *I Bhreasail,* the pointed island overgrown only by salty ferns).

Or in the huge forests of *Scythia, Transylvania* or *Bohemia* (place of princes and kings: Sigismund and Ferdinandos among them).

Whoever meets in these woods smells of foliage and honeycomb, of berries and wet skin: his evening meal consists of sunsets and of ablutions in unfamiliar brooks.

Whoever meets in forests sleeps in the forks of trees (because of the wild beasts); *Suibhne* was the most renowned tree-sleeper of *Macha Emain;* green-sleeved dreamers between moss and moon . . .

In forests not only friends and long-lost brothers are encountered, but wolfmen, girls raised by bears, dwarfs abducted at a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tender age by lynxes, or ladies long run wild, with no sense for polite conversation or human kisses.

The clearings in these forests are idyllic spots: a white stag streaks over them, a nightingale fills their air with its song, the warm westwind wafts through swaying hemlock or crowfoot . . .

Oh, the interjections when, after brief moments of disbelief, a brother throws himself into brother's arms, a friend into friend's, what an exchange of sincere words during the sparse meal of the year-long hunter and gatherer, what still more cheerful breathing in the four-legged rustling of summer ferns eaten away by the snails!

[*Translated by Derk Wynand*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SAMUEL HAZO

The Very Fall of the Sun

First Rites

DOWN, WINGING IN A TIGHT ARC down, the jet keels through crosswinds and downdrafts. The stewardess braces against the bulkhead and then resumes her lurching march to the front of the plane. He watches her. Again the crosswinds pitch the jet, and he strains slightly against his seatbelt. To distract himself, he reaches into his coatpocket and removes two visas. On the front of one he sees his name—X. Constantine—typed in red letters. Turning the visa over, he checks the other information—date of birth, nationality, passport number—nods to himself, repeats the checkout with the second visa and re-pockets both.

Through the half-curtained porthole on his right, he studies the blue ridges of water far below the blinding wings. The edge of a tan peninsula comes into view, gradually greens and then turns mountainous. He begins to discern black roads, then the red roofs of a white town, then the darker mountains of the interior, higher and with spills of snow flecking the granite peaks.

"Shall we wake your wife for the landing, Mr. Constantine?"

Constantine looks into the face of the stewardess. She is smiling a full, concerned smile that matches the collar of her ivory uniform.

"Is it necessary?" he asks.

"Not if you think she'll be all right as she is. Sometimes the approaches here can be slightly rough."

"I think she'll be all right. We've been in the air now for more than twelve hours. She needs some sleep. I'll watch her."

The stewardess strides unsteadily aft. At the sound of a high chime, the sign prohibiting further smoking blinks on and holds. For the first time Constantine is aware of the diversity of smoke scents in the cabin: flat, acrid French, dry Turkish, bland American, spiced English, pungent, almost cloying Egyptian. Slowly the scents blend and resolve themselves and, after a moment, are gone.

The wings shudder in the backwash of airbrakes. Constantine

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imagines that he is descending like sand through the needlehole of an hourglass. He leans back against the headrest and closes his eyes. He makes an effort to relax before the landing, not out of fear or even out of apprehension but to prepare himself for the new environment that awaits him. The practice leaves him with a deeper sense of the passing minutes. He forgets his books, forgets the meetings he has had with various government officials over the previous weeks, forgets the brief mission before him. He breathes slowly, then slower yet until the rhythm of his breathing matches the deep breaths of his sleeping wife.

His eyes strain and keep straining against his shut eyelids. Finally, he surrenders to their wanting to see and turns to his right. He sees cloudfroth rising to meet and then engulf the right wing. Relentlessly the jet keeps scudding down through cloudbanks. Constantine has the sense of being in absolute abeyance, as if the clouds are suddenly some middle element between land and air. He yields to his new mood and finds in it a kind of ransom. Peaceful, he imagines everyone ahead of him and behind him nervously waiting for the jet to clear the clouds, but he finds himself hoping that the clouds will continue forever. The wish makes him smile. Just then the clouds vanish upward all at once like so much stage scenery hoisted into lofts, and the jet vectors toward a tan runway that begins at the edge of a field of red flowers and runs like a road to an intersecting asphalt ramp that in turn ends at a sandstone terminal. At the first skidding touch of tires and runway, Constantine's wife awakens. For a minute she is startled and blinks herself into the present.

"Are we here already?" she asks.

The reverse thrust of the jets rises to a mounting growl and then steadies.

Constantine looks through his porthole at the mountains behind the terminal. It is already evening halfway up the mountains, and lights begin to come on in a scattering of red-roofed white houses. The jet veers to the left and taxis rapidly toward the terminal where a crewman waves it to its dock with a quick semaphore of yellow flashlights held overhead. Through the porthole Constantine sees the airport's tower. Like a windsock from the top of the tower snaps the triangular flag of the country Constantine has been reading about for months.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We're here," he answers.

Phoenix,
when the flames enfolded you,
what pen were you holding?
What feathers sprouted
when your old ones burned?
Buried in your own ashes,
what world did you confront,
what robe did you don,
what color did you choose?

Tell me.
Tell me what silence follows
the final silence
spun from the very fall of the sun?
What is it, phoenix?
Give me a word,
a sign.

Your banishment and mine
are one.
Your banishment and mine
and the banishment of heroes
are one.
Your banishment and mine
and the banishment of heroes
and the banishment of love and glory
are one.

Constantine

"Do you expect me to believe that you just drifted here? That you and your wife have been in the country for less than two days and that you just drifted here? Come now, Mr. Constantine, let's be serious."

Constantine can think of nothing more to make his statement

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sound other than it sounds. He repeats the story and then looks directly at the man who is pacing in jackboots before his chair. Constantine concludes that there is something of the martinet about him or, more specifically, something of the infantry master sergeant with seniority. The man's uniform resembles American Army surplus fatigues that have been worn to the cords. The man's black beard is trimmed neatly to half an inch at his chin and shorter on the cheeks and jowls. His eyebrows join bushily at the bridge of his nose, and the nose itself centers, like the beak of a falcon, the entire swarthy face. Even the widow's peak and the thick, unparted, grizzled hair of the man intensify Constantine's impression of him as a bird of prey.

"Do you know where you are?" asks the man.

"No."

"Do you know who I am?"

"No."

The man rakes his hair slowly with the fingers of both hands.

"You are an American?"

"I told you I am."

"And your wife, also American?"

"Yes."

"What are you doing in this country at this time of year? This is hardly the tourist season."

"I told you that I've been invited to lecture at the Public Union this coming Sunday night."

"On what subject?"

"Law."

"Law!"

"Law."

The bearded man spits out a laugh and aboutfaces abruptly. "Law!" he repeats, this time to the ceiling. When he faces Constantine again, he seems a bit less the interrogator.

"Will your lectures be about American law?"

"To a great extent, yes."

"Do you believe in it?"

"In the idea of American law, yes. We all disagree about particulars."

"Particulars? Are we one of the particulars?" He pauses. "You realize, I'm sure, how the international policies of your country leave something legally to be desired in this area, do you not?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not blind to certain inconsistencies, if that's what you mean. That's why I accepted this invitation. I welcomed the chance to say that there are other viewpoints in the United States apart from the so-called official ones."

"Unfortunately, they never prevail."

"You can never tell."

"Mr. Constantine, you insult my intelligence. Do you really expect me to believe that you did not come here as some kind of propagandist? Do you expect me to believe that on top of what you've already asked me to believe?"

"I'm just telling you the truth. I don't know if you believe me or not, but I can't put it any other way."

Constantine watches his counterpart sit down in the only other chair in the cinderblock room, remove a twisted black cigar from his tunic and bite it into position in his mouth. Then he strikes a wax match and passes the yellowing flame quickly back and forth over the tip of the cigar until it pulses orange. An intense blue smoke shrouds the man's face.

"Tell me your name again," the man says as the smoke dissipates.

"I've told you twice."

"Tell me again."

Constantine tells him.

"And the woman with you is your wife?"

"Yes. And before this goes any further, I want to know where she is."

"She's next door," the interrogator answers dismissively. "I realize your concern, but you need have no fears about her. Rosa is with her, and only Rosa. We are not barbarians, you know. The real barbarians are all in the government that is hosting you here." The man sucks smoke from his cigar, then dragons it out forcefully through both nostrils in thick, blue beams.

Constantine is concentrating on the man's eyes. They gleam with an inner focus and attention like a falcon's at the very instant that its hood is removed.

Though separated from their luggage, Constantine and his wife still seemed tied to it. They waited for their three matching bags to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arrive on the carousel as they might have waited for mail. Their expressions said that they needed their luggage's permission to leave, to make them complete again, to be re-united with their effects. Together with the other waiting passengers, they formed a restless circle around the moving planisphere that spindled the merry-go-round of satchels and valises being spewed on it from the treading incline at its core. The passengers stood or shifted from foot to foot like players at a wheel of fortune expecting their particular bags to reach their particular degree on the spinning circle. The carousel had that magnetism at its center that Constantine associated with roulette tables, hearthfires or whirlpools. It seemed to draw everyone's attention to its heart. Then it suddenly turned centrifugal when the bags arrived, and each passenger took his or her bag and departed in the spinoff to a destination.

Constantine lifted two bags and kicked the third ahead of him toward the visa desk. The official at the desk wore moist khaki and was sweating profusely above the eyebrows. He spreadeagled Constantine's passport on the desk before him and flipped the pages by one corner as if they were cards in a pinochle deck.

"Are you here for business or pleasure?" he asked, still flipping pages.

"The former."

"Business or pleasure, please?" the official repeated with some annoyance.

"Business."

"How long do you intend to stay?"

"Seven days."

"Where will you be staying in this country?"

Constantine told him the name of the hotel. With that the official lifted a triangular stamp and pounded the passports of Constantine and his wife with equal force and precision.

Once outside the airport, Constantine faced a chorus line of taxi drivers. They all had brown mustaches but one, and his was glisteningly black. After Constantine chose the one with the black mustache, he watched him stow the bags in the trunk of the taxi. Only when he was sure that the bags were loaded did he join his wife in the backseat.

"Why did you have to watch him do that, Zav?" his wife asked.

"Just call it an old New York habit."

"Can't you shake the habit for just one week?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Jan, that's one habit I never want to shake. The last time I shook it, you lost your purse, remember?" Constantine smiled at her with the ease of a man who had just played a decisive conversational ace. When he looked ahead again, the driver was already speeding past the corniche toward the city.

"Zav, what are those lights over there?"

"I don't know. Let me ask our friend here." Constantine leaned forward and asked the driver in his own language about the lights. The driver responded with a single word.

"What did he say, Zav?"

"My rough translation is that we've arrived in the middle of a carnival." Constantine sat back and looked at the roads he'd heard his father describe years ago, at the fireworks spraying the sky with greens and yellows, at the stucco houses on the city's outskirts and, finally, at the city itself. The fireworks loudened. Directly overhead, rockets exploded into gold comets. One flare collapsed at its zenith in a kaleidoscope of blue, coral, green, white and blood. Machine-gunning firecrackers snapped, snapped, snapped.

"I'm scared," said Jan, shrinking back in the seat.

"It's all in the script. In some of these countries the only alternative to silence is noise. Everything seems to move in extremes. Look at this driver. He has only two speeds—stopped and full throttle. No worry, though. We're well protected." Constantine indicated with a gesture the various medals, medallions, ikons and rabbit's feet clustered on the visor above the driver's eyes.

When the driver stopped at the first red light, a child's hand appeared through the opened window of Constantine's side of the taxi. Then there was a chorus of hands, some cradling a tray of Chiclets, some cupped for coins, some just grasping. After a moment they vanished, and all that Constantine saw at the window was the dark face of a boy no more than seven, and his eyes were saying *buy, buy, buy before the light changes*. Constantine began to reach into his side pocket while Jan tugged at the buckles of her purse. Meanwhile the boy at the window said something to the driver which the driver acknowledged by lifting his right hand feebly, as if he were shoo-ing a fly. The boy repeated himself. This time the driver muttered an answer in dialect, and the boy withdrew from the window without another word. Constantine looked out of the rear window just in time to see the boy put a match to a string of firecrackers on the road directly behind the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taxi. The firecrackers detonated one by one like sniperfire, making the entire string twitch and writhe like a snake on a griddle.

When the driver sped with a lurch away from the stoplight, Constantine watched the neon rainbows of the storefronts paint their passing stripes across his wife's face. Her loose brown hair turned red and blue. She had always reminded him of Garbo, and in the speeding lightplay the resemblance became gradually identical. He noticed suddenly that her lips were taut, her fingers fisted around the strap of her purse, her shoulders tensed high and in and more forward than usual.

"Relax, Jan," he said, covering the knuckles of her fisted hand with his palm. "You've been on tougher assignments than this. Remember Haiti, Cairo, Saigon?"

"That's what I've been telling myself, but there's something in me that's being difficult about it."

Constantine stared away from her at the passing city. On streetcorner after streetcorner he noticed pairs of open-collared soldiers with automatic rifles slung barrel-down from their shoulders. Among the jostling, smiling, shouting, singing and costumed carnivaliers, the soldiers stood out like grim punctuation marks . . . .

Once deposited at their hotel, Constantine and his wife edged their way through the lobby that was swarming with revelers. Suddenly, not one but three porters confronted them. One lifted two of their three bags while the other two porters competed for the third. Somehow they both won, and Constantine was faced with the necessity of giving tips to all three.

Above the registration desk hung a slightly tilted posed portrait that Constantine identified as the Chief of State. The Chief did not look unlike a portly grandfather with an unusually full white mustache waxed upright at the extremes, but he had the eyes of a croupier.

"Is that who I think it is?" asked Jan.

"None other."

"How is he?"

"The best of the worst. And that's a compliment."

"Is there any—to use the language of the ministries—viable alternative?"

"None. There are some rumblings here and there. It's rather hard to rumble very loudly when all opposition is tantamount to treason. The old man got ninety-eight percent of the vote last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

month, and, of course, he took the occasion to promise democracy when the people are ready."

"When's that?"

"When he thinks so."

"That has a familiar ring to it."

"It's a direct quote from Julius Caesar."

"What about the rumblings?"

"Guerillas mostly. Hit and run. No one knows how deep their support is with the people, and the government tries to keep that kind of thing quiet so that it won't hurt tourism."

"I'm wondering now why you wanted to come here in the first place."

"I played pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey, and this is what I won." As soon as he said it Constantine realized how flippant the remark sounded. "I don't really know, Jan. Chalk it up to the Quixote in me."

"What does that make me?"

"Mrs. Quixote."

They made their way through the crowd to the elevator just as the elevator doors parted like curtains before them.

"After you, Mrs. Quixote," said Constantine.

"Beauty before wisdom?"

"When was it any different?"

A blue room on the fourth floor awaited them. The double bed with its matching bolster centered everything. Opposite the bed a basket of fresh apples, bananas, grapes and oranges rested on the dresser and repeated itself in the mirror directly behind it.

"Our cup runneth over," said Jan and flopped on her back across the width of the bed. She clenched her eyelids and stretched as if everything depended on it. As happened periodically, Constantine saw her as if he had never seen her before, and he realized at that exact moment how beautiful and how irreplaceable she was. Treasuring the mood, he crossed the room to the window and saw that it had begun to rain.

"Do you hear rain?" Jan asked from the bed.

"It *is* rain. Someone told me that storms happen all of a sudden here. No warning."

"Does that just apply to storms?"

Constantine kept his rainwatch at the window. In the distance occasional volcanoes of fireworks continued to erupt in the wet sky.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Outside the hotel a number of parasols sprouted blue and white and black like mushrooms on the march. Their domes glistened in the rain and neon. Transparent, one revealed what it concealed—four spokes, a hatted head, a chin diminishing between lapels. The scissoring legs beneath the umbrella marched it out of sight.

By the time he turned around, the porters had brought the bags to the room, and Jan was already in the shower. He wanted to continue the rainwatch, to postpone the unavoidable unpacking, to let the hours of jetflight in the cramped seat slide from the present perfect into the definite past. He kept telling himself that he was really in the land of carnivals and tropical green, that he was really ensconced in a hotel with his wife, that he was listening to the counterpoint of showerwater and rain . . .

"Purified," said Jan, stepping from the bathroom. She had turbaned her head with a towel, and she was dabbing herself with a second towel. Constantine watched her. Even after a decade together, she still seemed a girl to him.

"You look good going or coming," he said.

"How about sideways," she countered, turning in profile and striking a pose.

"Come closer."

As she walked toward him, she became more serious than he wanted. "You know, Zav, we're just floating through this country on our own little island of money. When you get right down to it, we're really not *in* this country. We're just paying our way through it."

"Pure middle class," said Constantine, trying to smile her seriousness away.

"Somehow that bothers me."

"It used to bother me, but I've learned to accept it. It's what we are. Multiply us by 250,000,000, and you have most of the U.S.A. It won't be long before the rest of the world will be just like us."

"You can't mean that, Zav."

"That's enough philosophy. We're here to enjoy ourselves for a week—more or less."

"Do you know your government's policy toward our situation here?" asks the man with the falcon's eyes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes," says Constantine.

"Tell me, please."

"In a phrase, to keep trouble from starting, and, if it starts, to keep it small."

"Who told you that?"

"Let's say I overhead it."

"Do you call that a policy?"

"You asked me what the policy was. You didn't ask me what I thought of it."

"Do you call that a policy?"

"Of course not."

"Then we agree on something. For years I've called that the very admission of policy failure. It's the attitude of a fireman or some kind of medical aid. A fireman prevents nothing, but his livelihood depends on the existence of what he can't prevent. Absurd, wouldn't you say?"

"Absurd without a doubt."

"Absurd but so," responds the interrogator and bites down fiercely on his cigar. "Would you like to smoke?"

"Frankly, no. I just want to get back to my hotel with my wife."

"All in good time, my friend, all in good time," smiles the interrogator. He studies Constantine through the unmoving blue cigarsmoke. He continues to look at him for more than a minute. Then he walks back and forth, puffing at the cigar and raking his fingers through his hair. After a pause, he stops, slaps one of his knees as if he has reached a decision and says, "I believe you."

For several seconds Constantine simply gapes at the man before he asks, "About what?"

"About what you said earlier, about your blundering into us. I'm telling you that I believe that you and your wife somehow, in some curious way, just blundered into us."

"What changed your mind?"

"You."

"Then I suppose we can go."

"Not just yet. You'll understand why after we talk for a bit. Let's just say that some of your hosts on the mainland would give their careers to discover what you've discovered by sheer accident."

"What about my wife?"

"Your wife?"

"Yes, where is she?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I told you we are not barbarians!" With that he walks to a door on his left and opens it. Constantine is able to see Jan seated beside another woman who is trying unsuccessfuly to offer her a cup of something. Constantine strides quickly to the door as Jan rises to meet him. Before they can come face to face, the interrogator places himself between them.

"Zav, what's happening? What's this all about?"

"I don't know, dear. Are you all right?"

"Yes, you?"

"Yes."

"You see," interposes the interrogator, facing Constantine. "She is as unharmed as you are, and she will remain unharmed, I assure you." Then he turns to Jan. "You have nothing to fear, Mrs. Constantine. I must have a few further words with your husband. Please relax with Rosa and wait for us."

"We hardly have a choice," responds Jan.

"Quite right," smiles the interrogator, closing the door before Constantine and his wife can exchange another word. "Please sit down again, Mr. Constantine." After Constantine is seated, the interrogator settles in his own chair and goes through the ritual of biting at another cigar before lighting it. "So," he says, snorting smoke, "you are here to lecture on law."

"Yes. Next Sunday night, to be specific."

"Do you expect a large audience?"

"I really don't know. How could I know?"

"A distinguished member of your government spoke here last week. Do you know how many people came to listen to him? Forty-two. And thirty of them were what you might call a captive audience." He sucks at the cigar. "On the other hand, your most famous jazz musician performed in the national arena last month. Do you know how many came to listen to him? Two hundred thousand."

"That says a lot for American jazz."

"It says more about American foreign policy. But you Americans aren't listening to what it says. You draw no real conclusion from so-called little things like that."

"What conclusions do you draw?"

"The obvious ones, of course. Culturally you are riding a kind of popular crest. Foreigners like your music, your this, your that. But politically you are distrusted, loathed, hated—and with good reason."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I was going to touch on that in my lecture."

"Politically," the interrogator continues, "you don't have a friend in the world who is not as force-conscious as you are. If it weren't for your musicians and your artists and your missionaries and your students and so forth, your better face would be completely unknown."

"On that point we agree."

"Good. And you may be surprised to hear me say that your international posture is not what I think you really are. Actually I think that you are better than that—not much better, but better. In any case, how you let the world see what you truly are is your problem, really. At the moment I'm not concerned with that, but you should be." He removes the cigar from his lips and drops it to the ground and flattens it with the sole of his right boot. "Actually, Mr. Constantine, I want to discuss something else with you. It won't take much of your time, but the subject has been a preoccupation of mine for many years now." He pauses and looks at Constantine directly. "I want to discuss justice with you. I want to talk justice."

"Talk what?"

"Justice," responds the interrogator. He waits as if for an answer. When there is none, he goes on. "Why not? You're a professor of law. You spend your life on judicial matters, do you not?"

"Yes."

"Then let's talk justice." He offers Constantine one of his cigars, and this time Constantine accepts it. "You may call me Melchior if you like. We all just have one name here." He returns to his chair. "Like the apostles," he adds, seating himself and smiling. He tilts back in the chair. "Before we get involved in justice, I must ask you a troubling question."

"Yes."

"Just how did you reach this island? You say you drifted, but it occurs to. . . ."

"I told you the exact truth. I rented a boat on the mainland. Once we were at sea, I struck the sail and just let the boat go by itself. It was doing all right until you got in the way."

Melchior laughs heartily. He lets the chair tip forward with a snap. "It's amazing, Mr. Constantine. Really amazing."

"I never said I was a good sailor," says Constantine, smiling despite himself. Somehow he finds himself adopting Melchior's mood. It is as if something in his blood has decided that he has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing to fear from this man. In fact, he feels more than this. He will find the right words for it much later, but at the moment he simply feels akin to the interrogator. Constantine even has the curious sensation that he is talking to himself. The feeling persists. He almost knows what Melchior will say before he says it. It occurs to him that the whole dialogue is, paradoxically, a monologue by two and for two.

"You should be grateful you ran into us," Melchior says. "Otherwise you would have drifted into the open sea, and the open sea at this time of year is no place for inexperienced sailors."

The incoming sea and the western clouds touched at a line as straight as the edge of a ruler. From a distance the sea appeared to Constantine as a plain. Then, as he let his stare come surfing in toward him from the ruler's edge, he became aware of the tides. Far out they were purple, then green, then cobalt. Then the ridges started, white at their crests and bluish-brown below. The ridges charged toward him in a regular series of rushes until finally, one after another, what was purple, then green, then blue, then blue-brown became a swarm of salt suds on the beach, inking the sand brown as the suds swarmed over and quickly dissolved into it.

On an impulse Constantine galloped into the surf, pitched himself over the first breakers and stroked in seconds to the calmer, colder swells. He had not swum in months, and he felt a twinge of exertion in his lower back and in his biceps. By degrees the twinge lessened, and he kept stroking. He still had the physique of the middleweight he had been in college, and the intervening decades had only hardened him in that figure—even to the break in his nose that had never mended properly and that still gave him a pugilistic look. The only obvious signs of his aging were a few more lines at the corners of his eyes and mouth and the additional fact that, unlike most men, he had begun to gray at his forehead hairline and straight back rather than at the sideburns and temples. As he stroked farther from shore, he could feel an inner, second strength come to him and, from his experience as a boxer, he knew that this was his real strength and that it was there for him to draw on. Assured, he turned on his back and floated. The sea held him as if he were resting on a cot. He looked directly overhead. The only two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clouds in the sky were right above him, and they showed no signs of budging. The gently, heavily tilting sea chilled his shoulderblades while the sun warmed his kneecaps, his chest and his face. He closed his eyes as if he were on the verge of a nap and immediately began wondering what broken columns, what coins and jewels of another age, what barnacled cannon and musketry littered the seadeck beneath him. He remembered having told his wife once that every conqueror of note had, at one time or another, wiped his feet on this part of the world. The evidence of the various conquests was still visible in the ruined fortresses in the mountains, the occasional unmortared bridges over brooks and gorges, and even the otherwise inexplicable blondes among the dark-haired, dark-eyed, dark-complexioned population.

When he finally swam back to shore, Constantine saw his wife prone on a beach towel. She turned slightly at that moment. Her face, neck and shoulders glistened with newly applied suntan oil. Her loose auburn hair glinted red in the sunlight, and her slender face and body seemed more relaxed and simultaneously more lithe than he had ever noticed before.

"Let's sail," he said as he approached her.

"Let's what?"

"Sail. I made an arrangement for a boat for about six hours."

"Zav, I'm on my way to my first good tan in two years, and I'm not letting the opportunity pass."

"You can get all the sun you want out there on the water. The sun's very democratic that way."

"Do you really want to?" she answered, suggesting from the tone of her voice that she was really left with no choice.

"Why not?" he asked and waited.

"Okay," she conceded. "Let me gather my stuff."

When they reached the dock, Constantine completed arrangements with the boat-owner and led his wife to a red sailboat leashed to the very end of the jetty.

"Careful, Jan," he said, helping her aboard. Then he untied the rope that moored the boat bow-in and stepped aboard himself. Within minutes he had struck the boat's single yellow sail and was sliding smoothly over the shallows and out toward the bay.

"Is that your bag over there?" Jan asked.

"Yes. I brought it this morning."

"What's in it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A change of clothes for both of us."

"You devil," said Jan with a grin. "You knew all along that I wouldn't say no to you."

"Naturally," answered Constantine and struck a plucky pose at the rudder. Jan sat down beside him, and, together, they looked at the oncoming bay over the top of the sledding prow. Constantine felt himself yielding to the rhythm of the winds. He had always found sailing to be more than a form of relaxation. It was almost an exhilaration. He would always return from a sail both rested and rejuvenated. He told himself that this was probably due to the fact that he lived most of his days on another element where time and movement had a different tempo. A good friend of his had pursued the sport of gliding for years with the same result, explaining that he did it just to have a sense of flight. Constantine realized that his feeling for the sea was similar to that. It was quite alien to Jan. The usual effect of a sail upon her was to leave her seasick. Even Dramamine was of no help.

"How do you feel?" asked Constantine.

"So far, so good," she said. "Maybe I'm finally getting my sea-legs."

"It's all due to the middle ear. It has nothing to do with the legs."

"What does?"

"Seasickness."

"I thought you thought I had good legs."

"You're confusing the issue. Your legs are another matter entirely."

"My legs don't think so. In fact my legs feel slighted." She liked to match wits with him like this. It relaxed them both on neutral ground.

"I'll have a session with your legs later," said Constantine. Whenever he sensed that she was lapsing into byplay, he would try to wed himself to her mood. Eventually it would end in mutual laughter—the kind of laughter that nurtured itself and left them simple and that continued long after the cause of it had been forgotten.

"They have another date," continued Jan, and the laughter began. Letting the boat skid on, they laughed until they couldn't laugh any more.

"Why was that so funny?" asked Constantine, finally.

"I just have a devastating wit, that's all," said Jan with the start of a smirk.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Constantine smirked back and then leaned lightly on the tiller. The bay came up and settled as the prow sliced and dipped and skidded on. The surface was something between royal and navy blue. To his right a fin broke water and disappeared, then a second. He turned around and saw no sign of the shore they had just left. When he looked again at Jan, she was smiling and looking—really looking—at him.

"Zav," she said. "How many times have we had an opportunity like this?"

"Like what?"

"Like this. Two people. A boat. Just out of sight of land. Nothing in the vicinity."

"No soft music?"

"Zav," said Jan and paused. "Don't you know a proposition when you hear it? After all, isn't this ocean the biggest waterbed you can imagine?" Quietly, Constantine fastened the tiller and let the mainsail slacken until the boat settled to a stop on the surface—tilting occasionally in the mild swells.

Jan had gone forward and was lying face-up on several yellow beachtowels that she had spread on the roof of the cabin.

"Shall we go down the up-staircase?" Constantine asked her and smiled.

"What's wrong with right here?"

"Lowflying gulls. Lowflying jets. Even the clouds have eyes," he said with a straight face.

"Let them look," said Jan and reached for his hand. Constantine let her draw him down to her until they were side by side on the towels. They lay for a moment and looked up at the stationary sky. Then Jan sat up, removed her bathing suit as if she were unrolling a stocking and lay back down. Constantine turned on his side and faced her. She had closed her eyes. He looked into her face, microscopically, like any lover. He watched a single tear of sweat course slowly down between her breasts before it ended in the tiniest of eddies in her indented navel. When he kissed her on the mouth, he could taste the sun on her lips and smell it in her hair and on her cheeks.

"I love you, Zav," she whispered as she locked her forearms behind his neck and pressed him to her.

Constantine knew that she would say nothing else. It was habitual with her. When she gave herself to him, she gave herself absolutely. She would simply close her eyes as if she were closing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out any possibility of distraction. She seemed to be thinking—if such were possible—of nothing at all.

She whimpered quietly in his arms, and, when he asked her if he were hurting her somehow, she shook her head no, not so much in negation as in mystery. He tried to ally himself with her mood as he had allied himself with her laughter, but something in him balked. He kept thinking of other things. He began to think of the days ahead. Then he thought of the fins that he had seen moments before, and he realized that there were sharks in these waters. He imagined their dark coursings beneath the boat. Even as he fondled and entered her, he kept on thinking of the boat, the time of day, the hotel. It was as if he couldn't *not* think. Lately he had even begun to wonder if this might be a sign that his original affection for his wife could be changing, that she was no longer as real to him as were other immediacies, that he was starting to take her for granted. He thought he could blame it on aging. He told himself at other times that it might be because he had married late in his life. Yet the real reason, as he eventually admitted to himself, for his not marrying earlier had simply been that he had not met someone whom he felt he really loved. It was only with Jan that he could imagine himself married. Yet, he still felt that void, that need of a deeper appreciation of her, that impulse that could make her life matter more to him than his own. Perhaps he needed some crisis to fill him with a sense of possible loss. That was it, he thought. He lacked a sense of loss, lacked something. His bachelor years had left him too self-reliant. Had he taken the risk of life too late? Could he ever change?

He never admitted these feelings to Jan although he knew that she was too intelligent not to know that something was bothering him. Now, as the two of them grappled softly in each other's arms on the warm towels, he tried hard to think of nothing but her supple and receiving body beneath him, and for a moment or so he actually succeeded.

"And that was all?" asks Melchior.

"Yes."

"You mean that you simply let the boat drift until it beached itself all by itself?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not very good navigation, I'm afraid. We must have slept. But when I woke, the boat was in the sand, and one of your men was standing on the deck, and he had a carbine aimed right at my Adam's apple."

Melchior puts another match to his cigar, and it is evident from his expression that he is not thinking of the matter of the boat and the beaching any longer.

". . . so the next thing I knew," Constantine is saying.

"Yes, yes, yes. I know everything from that point. The matter's closed. Farfetched as it seems, I believe you." Melchior flips his chair around and sits on it the wrong way so that his elbows rest on the chairback and his thighs grip the seat like a saddle. "Now, let us return to our discussion." He puffs at the cigar. "The subject is justice."

"What do you want to know?"

"Well, to begin with, why don't I ask you if you think there is a difference between justice and what is usually called the law?"

"Frequently and regrettably, yes."

"There is a difference then."

"Yes."

"Which takes priority? Which is more important?"

"Justice, of course."

"Good, good. So far so good. At least we agree on basic principles."

"But I would have to add that you can't just ignore existing law on the basis of what you might think justice is."

"Why not? You just said that justice took priority."

"Because in that case laws could be displaced or ignored by any man's concept of justice at any given moment. After all, there is such a thing as precedent. Law is based to a great extent on precedent. If you want to make laws more equitable or more just by your definition, you must take precedent into account. Otherwise you destroy continuity. And the soul of law is continuity. If you destroy continuity, you usually destroy respect for the law. And when you do that, you're left with nothing at all. You can't have justice in a vacuum, you know."

"All this concern for precedent! What if the only precedent is bad precedent? What if there is no precedent at all?"

"There must be *some* precedent."

"Come now, my friend. Let's be frank with one another. In my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

country the precedent is always in favor of who happens to be powerful enough to make precedent work for him. Let me give you an example. There is at present a law here called simply the law of administrative detention."

"Is that the same as preventive detention?"

"If it's not the same, it's a twin brother. Under the law of administrative detention, the internal security police can and do arrest any person they choose on any pretext. They can do it without warning at any time of the day or night. After they take the man into custody, the man's family has no further contact with him, no opportunity to see him. Moreover, the victim is rarely told why he has been arrested. He is usually just kept in a cell with nineteen other men and women, all of whom have been similarly arrested, similarly kept in ignorance of their 'crime.' Men, women and children are subject to this kind of arrest. It makes no difference. They are all imprisoned without segregation in a cell containing exactly nineteen others. There is one electric light bulb in the cell, one hole in one corner for the waste of twenty people, no beds at all and no blankets."

"You seem to know quite a bit about the whole procedure."

"I should. I was under administrative detention for eight months, and my brother, as far as I can find out, is still there."

"Were you released?"

"No. I escaped. And I am the only one who ever escaped. My brother refused to escape with me because it meant killing two guards." Melchior pauses. "He has never been able to kill, you see. That is his . . . that is his fate." He pauses again. "But let us get back to the main issue. In the matter of administrative detention, you simply have the case of a bad law, and a bad law is certainly a bad precedent."

"I have to say that's true."

"Well, what do you do about the situation?"

"You try to rectify it, I suppose."

"How?"

"By trying to change the law, trying to repeal it."

"How?"

"You still have some constitutional alternatives here, don't you?"

"On paper, yes. In the flesh, no. I tell you as one man to another that constitutional reform here is impossible."

"Then I suppose you simply have to endure a hopeless situation."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Endure it! Endure! Do you know what you are saying?"

"I don't see any other alternative."

"You remind me of a textbook I read when I was in college. A certain philosopher of the thirteenth century advised his fellow citizens that their only response to a tyrant was to endure him. And do you know why he said that? He said that because history demonstrated to him that the lifespan of even the worst tyranny was seldom more than twenty-five years. He advised them to endure for twenty-five years! Do you call that a solution? Can you possibly agree with a position like that?"

"That sounds rather extreme."

"But you remind me of that. Your attitude reminds me of that." He waves the cigar. "The trouble with you is that you have never smarted under injustice, my friend. You can afford to be dogmatic. But you dogmatists are all alike. Your positions are fixed. And you are so damn generous about applying your fixed principles to the passing facts of this world. After all, you have your positions!" Melchior crushes the cigar on the chairback and lets the butt fall to the floor. "I've learned one thing about dogmatists, and it's true whether it's applied to a good dogmatist or a bad dogmatist. They are the easiest ones to defeat. All they can do finally is suffer or die for their dogmas. If they abandon them, they have nothing. That, my friend, is the tragedy of all the dogmatists who ever lived. Their allegiance to the absolute leaves them with no alternatives in this world. And this world is a relative world."

"That, of course, is your relative view."

"Granted, but it's also a view of life as it really is. The law of life is survival, regardless. The law of the absolute is *how* to survive. I think you will concede that there is a basic difference between the two."

"Which do you prefer?"

"Both," answers Melchior with a slight smile. "The problem is how to reconcile them. I've been trying to reconcile them for a long time now. That's precisely why I'm so pleased that we can talk. That's why I wanted to talk with you about justice. That's why I asked you for some suggestions about dealing with bad laws in the service of a bad system."

"Actually that's part of a much more fundamental problem. What it comes down to in the end is whether we should obey laws or men."

"Quite true. And in the abstract I would answer without the least

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hesitation. But unfortunately in my country we obey the men who make the laws and the men who enforce them. And if these men can play with the law—and they *do*— then law is a joke."

"Granted."

"Then I repeat my question. What do you do?"

Constantine tries to see where the question is heading.

"Tell me," Melchior repeats. "What do you do?"

"I don't exactly know."

"Then I'll *tell* you what you do. You hunger and thirst after real justice. That's what you do. It doesn't matter if the tyrant you decide to fight has his strong friends and his rich supporters to the north. It doesn't matter if your tyrant's friends sometimes come in what seems to be good faith to advise you about the law and due process and gradual change and the necessity of authority and so forth. That doesn't change anything. You still hunger and thirst after justice." Melchior rises from the chair. "Do you know what it is to be hungry? To be really hungry? Do you know what thirst means? Real thirst? Well, you apply that kind of hunger and thirst to justice. A hungry, thirsty fool named Jesus said that." Melchior turns away and says something in dialect. "That's an old saying we have here about Jesus. Freely translated it means that anyone who follows Jesus shouldn't be shocked if he comes to the same end."

Nothing about DeNubia struck Constantine as being anything out of the ordinary except his definiteness. He spoke always as if he were accustomed to conversations with people who could only understand simple, declarative sentences. Even DeNubia's appearance enforced this impression: the short, slightly grizzled hair brushed upright, the centralizing necktie pulled into a tight, dimpled knot, the singlebreasted brown linen suit with the central coat button buttoned, the habit he had of gesturing equally with his left, then his right hand. In all this, Constantine detected not so much an inner sense of measure but an acquired need for balance. He had seen the same symptoms in some accountants, many lawyers and almost all clergymen, and he had long since concluded that this was simply a reflex that betrayed a trained rather than a natural intelligence.

"If you were staying longer in this country," said DeNubia, "you'd see it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"See what?"

"You'd see what we have to contend with here."

"Is it that bad?"

"Not bad, just difficult. Uncle Sam is committed to this white-haired son of a butcher who runs this country. That's the basic premise. As Uncle Sam's Chief of Protocol here, I have to function against that commitment. I have to find some redeeming features in what we're committed to support. And that, my dear visiting specialist, is not easy. I'm not looking for much, mind you. Just a publishable anecdote now and then. But the big chief's sense of public relations is minus zero. After all, what the hell does he care about public relations? When you don't have any opposition and you also control the police, you don't have to cultivate an image. That goes without saying. All he knows how to do is tighten the screws."

"What do you mean?"

"Repression, repression. There's just too much damn repression." He paused, looked across the bar and gestured to a waiter. "Don't misunderstand me though. In a country like this, there has to be repression so that certain elements don't get the wrong ideas."

"Which elements?"

"You know . . . elements. I don't have to draw you a picture." He gestured again to the waiter. "There's one guy, for instance, who's been giving them a hell of a lot of flak for years now. He's no real threat, but as long as he's alive, the big chief and his buddies don't sleep as well as they'd like. Anyway, their answer to the vaguest suggestion of what they call disorder is to crush it and crush it fast. I just wish they wouldn't be so obvious about it." He paused and huffed. "You've heard of the fist of iron covered with velvet?"

"Yes."

"Well, here there's no velvet."

"And you, I gather, don't like that."

"Frankly I don't give a damn. Uncle Sam's interests are still safe here, and that's what really matters. That's all that matters to me. But I don't get very good copy to send back to Washington. After all, Congress votes zillions of dollars for use here, and I have one hell of a time trying to track down where the money goes. Once in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while they could build an orphanage or something. Instead they tell you they're spending the money on the interior. Where's the interior? Nobody seems to know."

As DeNubia concluded, the waiter he had been summoning came to the table. DeNubia ordered his third martini, which the waiter promptly brought before DeNubia dismissed him with a shake of his hand.

"Why do you think there has to be all this repression?" asked Constantine.

"What's the alternative? Anything approaching democracy here would be like opening every door in the political zoo."

"Well, I'm not equating democracy with political salvation or any other kind of salvation, but there should be some alternative to mere force, don't you think? At least, I plan to suggest that in my talk Sunday night."

"Don't."

"Why not? They know what I plan to say. They knew it when they invited me. It won't come as much of a surprise."

"They didn't really invite you."

"Who did then?"

"Let's say that someone told someone else that it might be a good idea if you paid a visit here. After all, your grandfather was born in this country. A lot of people thought it would be a good gesture if someone in your position returned to the land of his ancestors."

"Are you telling me this invitation is just a gimmick?" said Constantine and waited for an answer. DeNubia sipped at his martini and said nothing. "Well, let me level with you. This is no sentimental journey for me. I have some things that I plan to say."

"You can say whatever you want, but all that the newspapers will carry is that you've come back to see where your grandfather was born."

"I don't care what the newspapers say. Whoever listens to me will hear what I have to say. And there won't be any doubts about what I mean. I'm not going to gloss over fascism or any other kind of . . ."

"Relax," said DeNubia. "Take my word for it. Force is all that can work here. All I want to see is that the powers-that-be use more tact. They could be more diplomatic about it."

"How can you be diplomatic about something like that?"

"There are ways."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Are you afraid that what happened in the north will happen here? Is that what you're afraid of . . . that the whole country will go *left* all at once?"

"We won't let it happen."

"How could you stop it?"

"We just won't let it happen. We have the muscle. We'll let one of our carriers cruise offshore, or we'll land some marines on a ceremonial visit. That gets the message across. There are some things that we can't let happen, and a change in the *status quo* here can't be tolerated. Ergo, we'll prevent any change in the status quo from happening."

"More force?"

"More force, absolutely."

"Well, you're consistent, I must say."

"Not just consistent, but right. It's too bad that you can't stay longer so you can see for yourself what I mean. The longer you stay, the righter I'll appear to you." DeNubia paused and finished his martini in two quick swallows. "Just look around you. Look at these people now while this carnival is in full swing. For almost a year they've been working like coolies on a road gang just so they can let go for this three-day binge. They're so damn dumb that they don't see that the whole show is at their expense. The government sees it as a kind of safety valve for the masses. It keeps it under control. It tolerates it. Beside, it would be a hard tradition for the government to squelch. And frankly, why should the government want to squelch it? It gives the slaves an illusion of freedom for a few days before they have to return to their slavery. As long as the slaves have that illusion, they're no problem. Meanwhile a lot of them at the carnival die by drinking themselves to death, being trampled, knifed, poisoned or God knows what. The police just look the other way. That makes the slaves think that they're outsmarting the police and getting away with something, but they're not outsmarting anybody. They're born losers." DeNubia smirked and cleared his throat with the quick bark of a cough. "And the church is in cahoots with the power structure, which is the only . . . the *only* reason that there's a church here at all. So what if a few of the faithful are murdered or poisoned or raped? The survivors are urged to keep on confessing their sins and to do penance all their lives for the guilt they're made to feel. After all, the more they suffer, the holier and worthier they'll be in the sight of God, and so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on and so on, amen, amen, amen. It's the perfect arrangement. The government keeps the screws tight, and the church makes sure that the population stays superstitious and scared and thus totally dependent on the church, which is in turn totally dependent on the government. What could be more perfect?"

"You almost sound as if you're making a good case for reform."

"Reform? Never. Not me. I'm just describing things as they are. I couldn't stand it for a minute myself, but I'm not one of the slaves, so what the hell. I'm just here to do a job, and the easier my job is, the better I like it."

"If you couldn't stand the way things are for a minute yourself, doesn't it bother you that these people have to take it?"

"Hell no. They're used to it here. It's all they really know."

At that second the light in the cafe dimmed, and, after a drum roll, a pink spotlight stabbed a gradually enlarging circle on the velvet curtains over the bar. As the drum roll ended, the curtains fled apart to reveal a rather plump, heavily cosmetized blonde in a black velvet dress that matched the drawn curtains. Slowly she swung a white veil from the fingertips of her outstretched right hand. To the accompaniment of a single drum, she all too quickly began unzipping the sidezippers of her black dress. Constantine could not help thinking that the woman could have been undressing in her own bathroom. In less than half a minute the dress was off and flung like laundry into the wings, and Constantine found himself staring at a naked woman sleeved from breasts to crotch in something that looked exactly like a cellophane bathing suit.

"The suit looks like cellophane, doesn't it?" prodded DeNubia.

"Yes."

"Well," said DeNubia and huffed. "It is."

"Why?"

"The new morality, my friend. About a year ago the Chief of State claimed he had a vision. He dreamed that the old morality was playing into the hands of the enemies of the state. So he personally proclaimed the new morality. No prostitution. No alley shows. No provocative dancing. Provocative dancing was defined as anything that showed a woman's body bare from here to here. So the dancing girls, who are resourceful as hell, got around it by covering themselves from here to here with cellophane or mesh or anything that satisfied the letter of the law. In your profession I think that's called compliance."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That's one way to put it."

"Anyway, the police have been enforcing the new morality for almost a year. In the beginning they were tough about it. They took a lot of the girls in, cellophane or no cellophane. And what they do to whores here is something for a book. Shave their heads. The works." He exhaled audibly. "Lately the police have eased up a little bit. Not much, but enough."

The blonde above the bar was showing her front and then her back to different parts of the audience. Constantine noticed that she looked not only bored but tired.

"In the old morality," continued DeNubia, "you could come to this place or any place along the whole street and see whatever you wanted. For a price, of course, but anything was available. There was one girl here who used to do her whole act with a green banana you know where. Or sometimes it was a squash. It depended on the season." DeNubia re-filled his empty glass from the martini cruet. "Then there was a place near the stadium where they had a real alley show every Saturday after midnight. Invitation only. A woman and a burro. Or sometimes a woman and a monkey. Or even a dog. It depended on the season." DeNubia drank his new martini in one swallow. "Now what do you get? Cellophane."

Constantine was tiring of DeNubia rapidly. What had started as an evening of dinner and orientation had now degenerated, martini by martini. Actually Constantine had not wanted to come with the man in the first place and had finally yielded rather than agreed to the invitation.

"The morals here are next to zero," DeNubia was saying, more to himself than to Constantine. "I heard of one case last week where some old bastard got children on his own daughter. And she was only thirteen. And that kind of thing isn't unusual here. The more you live here, the more aware you become of the way they live. They're not human. And sometimes you feel yourself sinking to where they are. Anyone who lives here long enough eventually sinks to it in one way or another. And you don't just stay there. You go down, down, down. There's no bottom. You just keep going down."

"Why don't you resign? Why don't you quit so you can live somewhere else? You don't have to stay here."

"Too late."

"Why?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'd lose my seniority, my pension, everything." DeNubia drained the cruet into his glass, then drained the glass. "Besides, I only have twelve to go."

"Twelve what?"

"Years."

"Years?"

"Years."

Constantine tried to conceal his distaste for the man but could not. DeNubia apparently noted his change of mood and eased himself off the stool and onto his feet.

"Come on, I'll drive you back to the hotel," said DeNubia. As he and Constantine walked out through the foyer, he added, "The only truth you'll discover here is DeNubia's law. If you find something good, it couldn't come from here. If it comes from here, it can't be good. And if it is good and comes from here, it won't last."

"The trouble with your country's policy toward us is that you regard us merely as raw material," Melchior is saying. "You can't accept the fact that we are capable of any kind of self-perfection. The result is that you exploit us and support a government here that exploits its own people and that excels finally only in suppression. In fact, I suspect that you keep this government in power simply because it conforms to your bias of what a government here ought to be. You don't think that we're capable of better, so you deal with these criminals. At least, you can control them." He pauses. "It's not an original policy, by the way. The British did it before you, and they did it much better. In fact, they did it better than anyone who ever played at this business. The French were butchers at this kind of thing. The Belgians were no better. The Dutch and the Germans were nothing better than Dutch and German. The British simply had a better system. They had an overall policy and imposed it very skillfully. You Americans have a cartoon of the world and are disappointed when the realities don't conform to the caricature. It's a plausible theory, don't you agree?"

"With just a few reservations."

"The British system was almost beyond error, my friend. They simply found out who their enemies were, and then they managed somehow to keep them divided and at odds so that they fought one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

another and left the British alone. When the internal fighting became desperate, the British simply would intervene and serve as an umpire for a situation which they themselves created. Perfect."

"And what do you think of Americans? What do you think of us?"

"Powerful in bombs and money. Unsubtle. Shortsighted. Too answerable to lobbies and vested interests to achieve anything close to statesmanship except by sheer accident. Shall I go on?"

"Yes, if you don't mind."

"You are to me the greatest danger to peace in the world today. Why? Because you have a national vice whose only fruit is arrogance. And that national vice, my friend, is not violence or money or power or any of the usual cliches. Your vice is *victory*. You'll do anything to win. You need, really need to win. You're a country of results. You deal only with results. And the most acceptable result is victory. How something is done is not important to you unless it results in victory. Everything else is simply obstructionist. Honest criticism from an ally who has the temerity to consider himself an equal and tell you that you're in error? Obstructionist. Reservations about a policy from a nation that will be the first to suffer from that policy? Obstructionist. And so forth."

Constantine notices that Melchior is becoming more passionate as he speaks. The tone of conversation has gradually been supplanted by oratory. Even when Melchior pauses, he lets his hands and his eyes speak for him.

"What amazes me about you is that you have no real reason to provoke the trouble that you provoke," Melchior resumes. "You are more self-sufficient than any country on this planet, but for reasons that are beyond me you apparently don't know how seriously you ought to take yourself, and you end up by blundering and throwing your weight around and building up more distrust and hatred than you can imagine. And the irony is that a lot of this hatred and distrust never had to exist in the first place. You created it."

"I don't deny we've made our share of mistakes."

"You not only make them. You seem to specialize in them."

"At the risk of interrupting your one-man show, I'd like to ask you what would have happened to Europe during or after the war if the United States hadn't done what it did?"

"It was in your interest to do that! And it would be in your

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interest to do it again if you had to. And I don't fault you for that. I don't fault any country for acting in its own interest. When the United States acts in its own interest, it's plausible. It's only when you act in your worst interest that you run into trouble. And you consistently manage to do just that."

"Has it happened here?"

"It's happening every day." Melchior returns to his chair and slugs himself into it. He suddenly appears older and tired, very tired. When he resumes, he speaks to Constantine as if he were speaking to a friend. "We have a bad situation here, and we've had it for too long. One of our oldest proverbs says, 'When your enemy is your judge, to whom do you complain?' That's our situation. The longer this tyranny lasts here, the more convincingly it seduces governments like yours to deal with it simply because it *is*. And the more you deal with it, the more securely it establishes itself." Melchior looks at the ground but keeps on speaking. "Well, I've given up hoping for justice from abroad. I used to be like that. I used to live on that dream. I used to believe that something or someone from abroad would come and save us. Once, I even thought that God would do it. But nothing happened. And then one day the scales fell from my eyes, and I realized that justice doesn't happen unless you force it to happen, that you must take the law into your own hands and make things change, that . . ."

"Might makes right? That seems to have a familiar ring to it."

"A quite familiar ring, I assure you. But the clever lunatic who made that statement was never refuted. Think about it. He was *never refuted*. He was simply defeated. And what defeated him? A might that was stronger than his own."

"But isn't that what's wrong with the international scene today? Force and counterforce. One begets the other."

"You think that force and counterforce are what's wrong with the world. I've taken the theory one step further. I say that this is not what's wrong with the world. This *is* the world."

"Then I have to say that there's not much to hope for in that direction."

"There's never been much to *hope* for. That's the point. There's only something to *plan* for."

"And what might that be?"

"In these circumstances—in this country—at this time, the only thing to plan for is the elimination of the present regime. No less

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than that." He looks at Constantine and keeps on looking. "Elimination by any means whatever. Any means whatever."

"Does that mean eliminating anyone who tries to stop you?"

"Correct."

"So, the end is all that matters then. The end justifies everything."

"Correct."

"That has a familiar ring to it also."

"I suspect that you can trace it to Eden."

"With the same consequences?"

"Perhaps. But let's talk facts, not mythology." Melchior again changes his mood. He is just as serious, but freshly so. "Listen. You have known assassinations in your country recently. Forget the moral arguments for a moment, and just consider assassination as one of many possible political weapons. If it fails, it fails. But if it succeeds, it can do many things. It can change history."

"But what happens to the moral arguments in the meanwhile? What happens to justice in the meanwhile?"

"They learn to adjust to the facts."

If his grandfather had not immigrated to the United States at the turn of the century, Constantine thought that he might be walking in the Plaza of the Martyrs as just another countryman and not as an official visitor. Even as he walked, he felt himself slipping from what he knew he was to what he might have been. Periodically, he smiled to himself as he walked.

Jan had been invited by DeNubia's wife to rummage in the flea market, and Constantine had decided on an afternoon stroll through the plaza for lack of anything more pressing to do. As he walked, he realized he had chosen the wrong hour of the day. It was siesta time. All the shops were shuttered, and only a few people meandered through the streets.

Constantine could not help feeling that he was walking through a deserted movie set. A few other tourists passed by him, but there were no natives. Seeing himself reflected in the windows of the parked taxis, he tried to imagine himself as he might have been. He saw himself transfigured into a farmer, then a merchant, then a parliamentarian. Would this have been his weekly visit to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

capital from one of the villages? He saw himself accompanied by a daughter and a son. Then he remembered what he had already learned of the regime, and he imagined himself as one of the many recalcitrants imprisoned in preventive detention camps for treasonable activities. To change his mood, he imagined himself escaping and continuing the fight from the mountains.

This last possibility intrigued him. From what he had seen of the government and from what he knew about himself, he had no doubt that he would have instinctively resisted it. But how far would he have gone in his opposition? Would he, if he were a citizen of the country, have contented himself with hiding his private discontent, biding his time, enduring the worst, husbanding his resources and his rage? Would he have made his opposition public and courted inevitable imprisonment? Or would he have taken to the hills and fought the little, absurd wars of resistance, regardless of consequence? Even during his brief stay in the country he had already heard of various resistance groups which were engaged in that very thing. There was one man in particular—Constantine had forgotten his name—whose exploits against the regime had become almost legendary.

The torpor of the afternoon soon brought him back to the plaza. Taxi drivers snoozed in their taxis, some almost at attention, others open-mouthed in front seat sprawls, a few slumped forward on their steering wheels. The shuttered storefronts and second-story windows seemed almost prohibitive—like convents or penitentiaries where the inhabitants had long since gone to secure sleep. As he passed one corner, Constantine saw a large brown dog in what appeared to be a condition of abject collapse against a curb. Closer, he saw fleas and maggots on the black engorged tongue protruding from one side of the dog's mouth. The legs were rigid. Fleas and flies were crawling, swarming or holding still on the dead dugs.

When he passed the street of whores that DeNubia had casually pointed out to him the night before, he saw the women lounging in their doorways like housewives between chores. A few were smoking meditative cigarettes or water pipes. From one of the houses trailed the voice of a woman singing a French folksong in perfect pitch.

By the time he returned to the hotel, Constantine was more exhilarated than tired. It was as if he had just come from touring an old neighborhood. He found himself wishing that his father were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still alive so that he could swap anecdotes with him. Instead he sat in a white leather chair in front of the registration desk and began perusing a copy of *Le Monde* which someone had left unfolded on the arm. He listened while a tall gray-haired man in a white suit conversed with the concierge in Italian. Suddenly a boy of no more than two came skipping down the lobby. The gray-haired man in the white suit turned around, smiled and looked at Constantine.

"Viva la vita!" said the man as the child skipped past.

Constantine nodded, then felt his smile fade as he looked at the slightly tilted portrait above the registration desk. He would see the Chief in person soon. He kept studying the Chief's croupier-eyes in the portrait. Then he folded the twice-read newspaper he had found, left it on the arm of the chair and headed slowly for the elevator.

What is it we love or fear
but shadows of ourselves?
When I recall your suffering,
my phoenix,
I forget my own.
No mother held you
when you left
until you burned for breath.
No father blessed your exile
in his heart
before you saw it born
in flame with each horizon.

I've left.
I've left my loved one.
I've left my loved one
on a mat of straw
to grieve my going.
Astray, I swallow dust.
I, who learned love
from my father's eyes,
have left my father's house
to be the prodigal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am a hunted bird.
I steal my bread.
All I see is desolation.
Pursued by vultures,
my small wings lose their feathers,
feather by feather.

They say my song is strange
because it has no echo.
They say my song is strange
because I never dreamed
myself awake on silks.
They say I disbelieved the prophesies,
and it was true,
and it is still and always true.

Melchior

Between questions, Melchior keeps trying to identify to himself what it is about Constantine that is simply not typical of other Americans he has met. He is convinced that the man is not a dupe. But he wonders if Constantine really believes what he is saying—believes it in his blood as well as in his mind. Indeed, several times during their conversation, Melchior remembers how some of Constantine's words have an echo for him. Where has he heard them before? Finally, he realizes that these are words that he himself used when he addressed himself to these subjects in his own law school days before the revolution. Perhaps this is why he keeps finding it difficult to disbelieve Constantine or even to be angry with him. However, he does feel a certain impatience. He resents Constantine's tendency to withdraw into his principles. He wants to tell him that there are other principles, but . . .

"Tell me, Mr. Constantine, what is your real opinion about what I've been saying?"

"About force versus force?"

"Precisely."

"It's simply gangsterism. It may be gangsterism for an ideology, but it's still gangsterism."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gangsterism for you, perhaps. But what about all the people in my country who benefit from what we do? To them we might be saintly gangsters, don't you think?"

"Is that supposed to make everything all right?"

"As far as I'm concerned, yes."

"Then I've misunderstood you. I thought you said earlier that we were going to have a talk about justice."

"What else do you think we've been talking about?"

"Force."

"Force to you. Justice to me."

"Then you and I have radically different definitions of justice."

"I'll give you my definition in a moment. But I should say in advance that my definition is not what it used to be. It has changed. . . . It has evolved over the years. Or perhaps I should say that my idea was changed for me."

"Changed by what?"

"Circumstances. Justice became more than a mere idea to me. It became something that I wanted to see prevail."

"Prevail how?"

"Not how. When."

"But how would it prevail?"

"In any way that was available and by any means possible. When you believe in something that is as necessary to you as the air you breathe, there really is only one decision."

"And what is that?"

"Are you willing to postpone having it, or are you willing to have it at all costs."

"At *all* costs?"

"At all costs."

"Then I must repeat that you and I have radically different ideas about justice."

"My definition of justice is quite uncomplicated, my American friend. Justice to me is what a man can live with after he's been wronged."

"That's not exactly the way I plan to define justice in my lecture."

"It probably isn't, but my suspicion is that you've derived your definition from books exclusively."

"That seems to be where all the precedent is."

"Not all, Mr. Constantine. Not quite all."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In one corner opposite the locked iron door, one prisoner sat on the floor with his knees drawn up almost to his chin. At times he simply rested his head on his knees. All the other prisoners but two were asleep on that side of the cell that was farthest from the hole in the floor that served as the common latrine for all the prisoners. From the hole came a steady, fermenting stench of urine, feces and vomit.

"We must always see ourselves as twenty torches in this hell," said Melchior. "We must be like torches, Sebastian."

"Even the woman?"

"Even the woman," answered Melchior, looking at the cell's only female prisoner who was sleeping fitfully to his right. "In this struggle, there is no male or female. We are all the same, all human."

"Nineteen men and one woman," said Sebastian. "I wonder if it's this way in the other cells."

"What difference does it make? In each cell we must act like twenty soldiers, and each soldier must burn like a torch until he is free. We are not men and women any longer. You and I are more than just brothers, Sebastian. We are torches." Melchior pauses. "Torches . . ."

"I've often wondered what made them decide on twenty in a cell."

"They like even figures." Melchior shifted his weight from one buttock to another. He squinted up at the caged naked bulb that burned in the center of the ceiling. For eight months he had lived beneath the inextinguishable sun of the same bulb, which had denied to him and to the other nineteen souls in the cell the simple privilege of darkness. "If I do nothing else, I'll break that bulb."

"It's too high. Even if you could stand on my shoulders, you'd have no way to break it through the steel mesh around it. And then what would we do even if you succeeded? We'd be in total darkness all the time." Sebastian huffed and looked away. He was slighter than Melchior, and his beard was not as full. He had lost hair at the crown so that he looked almost like a tonsured monk. When he looked again at Melchior, he was both serious and apprehensive. "Are you still determined to try tonight?"

"You know I am."

"Tell me again exactly what I must do."

"Quickly. It must be done quickly," said Melchior and stopped.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"When the guard pushes the bucket through the latch, there is a fraction of a second when the guard's hand is still on the bucket within our reach. If we can move at that instant and grab his hand, we can pull him flush against the latch. He will be at our mercy. He will have no choice but to unlock the door or have his arm broken. From then on, we simply have to take our chances. We will have the guard's gun, so we won't be defenseless. After that, who knows?"

"I'm not for taking a life, regardless."

"You've said that already."

"I mean it, Melchior. I can't bring myself to do it. It's something almost physical with me. I can't bring myself to it."

"Let's hope it won't be necessary."

"How many of the others here know we're going to try tonight?"

"They all know we will try, but no one knows that it will be tonight. If we succeed, we will leave the door open for anyone who wants to follow us."

"Do you think someone here might have betrayed us already?"

"How could anyone know? Besides, they realize what I would do to them even if they tried to say something."

"But you forget that they will have to pay if we succeed. The guards will take out their revenge on them. That's reason enough for someone to talk in advance."

"Or it's all the more reason why they should follow us." Melchior coughed into his hand. "We cannot think that way. There is enough to think of without that." Suddenly he cocked his head to one side. He seemed suddenly transformed as if he were a lion or an eagle who had spotted prey.

"What is it?" asked his brother.

"Sssh."

"Is it time?"

"I thought I heard footsteps."

"How can you hear footsteps? You know they walk in their stocking feet when they bring the slop."

"Sssh." Melchior leaned forward. He nodded a slow yes to himself, gestured to his brother and crawled quietly closer to the latch in the door. None of the other prisoners stirred except the woman. She watched them sleepily at first, realized what was happening and sat up, completely awake. Melchior looked directly at her and put one finger to his lips. The woman nodded. Melchior crawled directly in front of the latch and waited. His brother

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

positioned himself on the right side of Melchior. They had rehearsed repeatedly for this instant, agreeing that the one who saw the guard's hand first should be the first to seize it, making sure that he gripped above the wrist and, with less danger of slippage, pulled in as forcefully as possible. Seizing the guard's hand by the fingers would provide no leverage at all. It had to be the wrist or nothing.

Melchior and his brother crouched over the latch. Each of them held both hands ready for the pounce. Melchior sucked breath and exhaled quietly through his nostrils. Certain that he had heard the guard's footfalls, he listened while someone on the opposite side of the door quietly unlocked the latch. Slowly the latch crawled up its slot in the door until it was bucket-high. Melchior saw the bucket, smelled the starchy brew of rinds and water that had been his only breakfast for more weeks than he cared to remember and flexed his poised fingers.

He was the first to see it, the thumb at the bucket rim—then all the fingers, then the knuckles, then the back of a flat hand tattooed with a small fish near the wrist, then the wristbone itself showing beneath a dungaree cuff. . . .

Lunging with both hands, Melchior had the wrist. The bucket spilled its gruel down the latch and over the floor as Melchior pulled the man's arm by the wrist toward him as hard as he could. For an instant there was no sound at all. Some of the other prisoners had awakened and were staring with an almost comatose indifference at what was happening. Melchior braced his feet against the door and, almost sitting on the floor, was pulling the guard's wrist with both hands until he had stretched the guard's hand taut.

"The key!" shouted Melchior. "Open the door." He twisted the guard's arm to the right.

The guard screamed.

"Open the door!" Melchior ordered and twisted the already twisted arm further.

Again the guard screamed.

"Shut up and open the door!" he commanded. He twisted the arm again and then let it return to its original position. The guard was quiet, and there was no other sound from that side of the door nor from within the cell. All the other prisoners were awake and watching.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You have one more chance," shouted Melchior. "Open this door in five seconds, or I will crack your arm."

From the opposite side of the door the guard spat back a curse in dialect.

"Break it!" Melchior muttered to his brother. "Break it now."

Sebastian stared at Melchior but did not move.

"Now," shouted Melchior. "Break it. Crack it with your heel now, for God's sake. Now!"

Melchior tugged again at the guard's arm and twisted it to the right so that the guard's fingers clutched at the air. Sebastian jumped to his feet. The guard's fingers kept flexing. Melchior could feel a sudden counterpull as the guard tried to pry his arm free.

"Now, or I'll lose him. Now!" he shouted.

Sebastian lifted his right leg over the guard's straining arm, lifted it higher and then came down with all his force. He had aimed for a spot several inches above the wrist. The heel of his boot hit it squarely. There was the sound of a muffled snap as if a not altogether dry branch had been trampled on a path. The guard's fingers became like the fingers of an empty glove. The guard's scream turned into a grunt, and the grunt turned to whimpering.

"Open the door, or I'll break it again. You have just a few seconds, I swear!"

Whimpering, the guard said he was getting the keys. In a moment there was the sound of key against key from the opposite side of the door, then the sound of one key in the lock, then the loud click of the lock unlocking. Melchior still held the wrist of the guard's broken arm.

"Pull the door open," he told his brother. "Slowly. Very slowly. We don't know who's there." Melchior knew that the precaution was unnecessary; if the guard had been accompanied, he knew he would not have gotten this far. Still . . . .

With the door ajar, Melchior inched the guard by the wrist toward him. The door was still between them.

"Grab him," he told his brother. "Grab him quickly before he can reach his gun." He kept the pressure on the broken arm. "There. Now pull him in quickly."

Only when the guard was in the cell did Melchior release the wrist. The guard's arm fell like a dead thing to the floor. The guard was almost unconscious. Immediately Melchior seized the guard's pistol and knife, then turned to the other prisoners.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Who comes with us??"

No one moved.

"Who comes with us?"

The woman stepped forward.

"Only you, Rosa?" Melchior waited. "Who else?" Still no one. "Very well. I leave this one to you." He spat down at the guard and turned.

Followed by his brother and Rosa, Melchior left the cell, closing the cell door behind him. The corridor was empty. Staying close to the wall, the three of them crept toward a door at the far end of the block. It was open, probably left that way by the guard who had brought the bucket. Melchior looked out. It was dark, but dawn was already yellowing the upper sky. He could make out a fence approximately fifty yards from the block. He thought he saw a gate. Standing in front of the gate was another guard. He had his back toward Melchior and was smoking a cigarette. He had a rifle slung from his left shoulder.

"It must be now," whispered Melchior to his brother and Rosa. "There is one more guard for sure. He may be the only one, but I don't know." He paused and gave the knife to his brother, the pistol to Rosa. "I will have to risk surprising him. If I am lucky and if he's alone, I think I can overpower him before he can make a sound. When I do, you follow me."

"Maybe he will move away," whispered Sebastian. "Why can't we wait and see what he's going to do?"

"No time, no time," said Melchior and stepped out into the swiftly lightening darkness. The guard had not moved. The smoke from his cigarette rose in spirals above his head. Melchior turned again to his brother. "Remember. When I have him, follow me. Instantly."

Crouching and moving forward on his soles, Melchior approached the guard, who continued to smoke and face the gate. Out of the shadow of the blockhouse, Melchior suddenly was in the open with more than twenty yards to go. Then he was halfway between the blockhouse and the guard, then less than that, then no more than ten feet. The guard dropped his cigarette and started to turn. He was about to unsling his rifle when Melchior was on him. The guard and Melchior landed heavily on the rifle while Melchior attempted to pin the guard's hands. He could hear the rapid footsteps of his brother and Rosa behind him. He stared at the guard's face from the distance of a few inches. The guard's eyes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were wild with terror and surprise. Melchior pinned one of the guard's hands to the ground with his knee and cupped his free hand over the man's mouth. Just then his brother and Rosa were beside him. Melchior gestured for his brother to use the knife.

"Quickly," muttered Melchior.

Sebastian raised the knife over the guard's throat. As soon as the guard saw it, he began to squirm and thrash and force muffled bleats against Melchior's clamping palm.

"Now!" said Melchior.

The hand that held the knife remained poised and quivering, poised and quivering.

"Give it to me," ordered Melchior, releasing his muting hand from the guard's mouth and seizing the knife from his brother's hand. The guard thrashed in panic and screamed just before Melchior drove the blade into the left side of the throat and downward until it hit neckbone. The scream petered out, but the body kept moving. Melchior held the knife all the way in for a moment longer. By degrees the thrashing slackened and stopped.

"Run for the gate," he told his brother and Rosa. Rosa obeyed, but Sebastian stood still. He was staring at the knife jutting from the guard's throat. Blood was sliding down the guard's neck.

Rosa had already reached the gate and pushed it open. Seeing this, Melchior ran after her, but his brother did not move. When Melchior and Rosa reached the woods beyond the fence, Melchior turned. His brother stood like a witness beside the stabbed guard. Melchior could hear movement and voices from the dark of the camp. Orders were being shouted. Two yellow searchlights began to comb the open spaces between the blockhouse and the fence in intersecting strokes. Suddenly a siren whirred into a crescendo.

"Run!' shouted Melchior.

Just then one of the searchlights found Melchior's brother, overshot him and returned.

"Run!"

Sebastian did not move. Even after the first shot, he continued to stand limply by the body of the guard.

Melchior looks at Constantine as if he is trying to memorize him. He notes the streak of gray hair that runs from Constantine's forehead almost to his crown. He looks closer at the face, noting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

how the forehead and eye-corner lines give the face, except for the broken nose, a more Florentine look than he has previously noticed. The cheeks go concave under the cheekbones and fall straight down in two sheer lines to the set jaw.

"I asked you before, Mr. Constantine, about assassinations in your country. Tell me. Did they change your history? Did they influence your history or not?"

"You know they did."

"That's preacisely my point. They *changed your history*. It does no good to debate their ethics. It does no good to lament. The act was done. Finished. It makes its own justice. And its justice is the reality you're left to face. And you have no choice but to face it."

"But at quite a price."

"And what price is that?"

"Well, as childish as this might sound, at the price of democracy itself. It's more than murder. It's the murder of an idea. If you're a democrat, you must be a democrat all the way. You can't take the shortcut of violence just so you can have your own way. That's what kills the idea. It makes all your principles sound like so much foolishness."

"I never said they were foolish, Mr. Constantine. I wish some day that we could try them here, but that day is not near, I'm afraid. Meanwhile, we have to use other methods. We have to use the methods at hand."

"And what are they?"

"Whatever reduces the life of the regime in this country by a single day, a single minute."

"And that includes what you mentioned earlier—violence, assassination. We've come back to that."

"That's all we have, my friend. But I don't expect you to agree with what we do. You don't know what we've faced here. All I want you to do is to see our problem, to understand that our point of view is possible, that our methods are all we have. When you oppose barbarians, you have to use the methods of barbarians. If not, they will exterminate you."

Constantine finds himself responding to Melchior's tone. He is surprised to discover within himself something that really does want to understand, but there is something else that bridles even at this. He wonders in passing which impulse is more natural to him and which has been merely acquired. He is still wondering while Melchior repeats himself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Is it possible for you to see our struggle here from our point of view? Tell me. Yes or no."

"You keep asking me to put aside the moral question and at the same time you insist that we talk about real justice. I simply find that kind of distinction impossible, and seeing it from your point of view doesn't change that."

Melchior seems stunned for a moment. He tries to respond, stops and then coughs dismissively.

"You told me," Constantine resumes, "that justice is what a man can live with after he's been wronged, but I can't see how that differs from simple revenge."

"I prefer to call it a divine revenge."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Of course, I believe it. I must believe it."

"Then you must have reasons that are beyond me."

"I have."

"Are they good enough to make you live like this, to make you live by the sword?"

"They are for *me*. And that's enough. I have to live with myself. I have to justify myself to myself." Melchior stops, and his neck begins to redden. "Listen, I don't choose to live by the sword. But I did choose not to be killed by one. And I found out that the only way not to be killed by the sword was to be a swordsman myself."

"But how does that make you any less a killer?"

"Because my purpose is different. My purpose is more sacred. The minute I achieve my purpose, I will break the sword forever. I will break it myself."

"But isn't there something that says that those who live by the sword will die by the sword?"

"Mr. Constantine," shouts Melchior. "You amaze me! Are you that blind that you don't see the difference between repression and resistance to repression?"

"I see the difference. I just don't think that resisters should use repressive methods. If they do, there's no difference."

"Very well, but the God of your quotation disagrees with you. You said that those who live by the sword shall die by the sword. I'm familiar with the quotation. Now assume for the moment that the pigs who rule this country were the first to choose to live by the sword. As a matter of fact, they *were*. By your quotation they will die by the sword. Is that not so?" Melchior pauses, but Constantine makes no response. "Very well, then. Who wields that sword, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

next sword? The second sword must be wielded by someone, is that not so? And will that second swordsman also die by the sword? And who wields the just sword and who does not? Answer me that."

Now it is Constantine who is muted. He feels like someone who has been completely and mysteriously disarmed. He looks at the floor and waits for Melchior to pursue his advantage, but Melchior seems content to let the silence last.

"I'm afraid I have no answer for that," Constantine says at last.

"There really is no answer," says Melchior and pauses. Again his neck reddens. "What stuns me is that you never saw it until this minute." Melchior's tone changes. He is not talking to Constantine now but to an invisible audience in the room. "Perhaps you never thought that someone from here could make you see how weak your arguments are. After all, we are not really sophisticated enough for you. We are too raw. We are just here to be used. We don't have the capacity to refine ourselves. We are not capable." He turns back to Constantine. "Well, we are capable! We are right now capable!"

Constantine does not answer. Melchior suddenly realizes that his mood has gotten the better of him. He stops, waves his hand hastily as if to dismiss such oratory like smoke from the conversation and sits down heavily.

"I envy you, Constantine," says Melchior, letting his shoulders droop. "Truly I do. You don't know it, but you show me all my lost convictions. You won't believe this, but for the past hour or so I've almost felt that I've been talking to myself—my old self, I admit, but still myself. It's as if you are what I used to be."

"Is that a polite way of telling me that I'm naive?"

"No, not naive. Inexperienced perhaps." He slides down in the chair, stretching his legs so that they rest on the backs of his heels. "Maybe you're just luckier. You haven't seen what I've seen, and I can't forget what I've seen. You haven't lived through times that change you, change your soul, change you almost against your will." He looks at the floor and shakes his head wearily. "Those days . . . Sometimes I wish I could be what I was, could be myself again. Then I remember things, and I know that I am what I am. I accept it." He shakes his head again. "Too much has happened."

"Can't you find some way to leave the country? Can't you start again somewhere else?"

"I could, but it would be a betrayal. You know, I'm almost like Socrates. Really, I have the same kind of choice. I know that I could

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

escape. It would not be difficult. But what would it prove? What would it solve? I will tell you what it would prove. It would prove that I, Melchior, could escape. What would it solve? Nothing." He smiles to himself. "No, this is my hemlock, Constantine . . . my chalice. No one can drink it for me. Besides, there are people in the city and the villages who look up to what we are doing. As long as we survive, they can still hope for something better."

"And if you don't survive."

"Oh, we will surive, regardless. Even if we are killed, we will survive. That is our . . . how shall I say it? That is our secret. The only thing that can defeat us is to abandon the struggle. If we stay, we will win, regardless."

"What makes you so sure of that?"

"It can't be otherwise. You see, our struggle is a strange one. We have a definite direction, but we have no precise plan. We know our goal, but we don't know exactly how to achieve it or how long it will take us. In that way, we are different from the government. The government has precise plans but no definite direction, except to preserve itself. Because of that, the government will lose. It is inevitable."

"Do you have a timetable for this?"

"It's not a matter of time, not a matter of time at all. It *will be.* And knowing that it *will be,* we stay and do what we have to do." Melchior pauses. "Perhaps the best way I can bring this home to you is to tell you about a legend that all of us learn as children here. It's part of our lives, part of everything we do. You might say that it is our faith, our real faith, which is what the church never understood about us. My mother was the first to tell it to me. After that, I heard it in songs and poems. It's part of the air we breathe. But still I remember it as my mother told it to me . . ."

"Tammuz remembered her," said his mother.

"Remembered her from where?" asked the boy.

"Melchior, I told you where. Did you forget so soon?"

"It's hard for me to remember everything."

"Don't you remember how I told you that the god Tammuz was a shepherd here in our mountains and how he lived in the grotto near the waterfall?"

"Yes."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And don't you remember how one day he saw the queen named Cybele while she was gathering flowers in the fields and how he knew from that moment that he loved her and, after she saw him for the first time, how she knew the same thing herself?"

"Yes, I remember. But you told me that the queen was married already."

"Yes, she was married when she was a very young girl, and her husband the king was older than she was by many years. And every time the king saw how beautiful Cybele was as she became a woman, the more he wanted to keep her all to himself, and he would become very jealous if any young man even looked at the queen."

"What does that mean—*jealous?*"

"It means that you don't want anyone else to have what you have. You don't want to share what you have with anyone. The king was like that. He did not want anyone to love Cybele but himself, and he wanted Cybele to love no one but him."

"Is that why he became jealous of our lord Tammuz?"

"That was why. But the god Tammuz understood this. He did not want to take Cybele from her husband, so he returned to the mountains by himself and continued to be a shepherd. Every day while he watched his sheep, he would sit with his staff and his shepherd's pipes beside him and think of Cybele. Then one day, just by accident, Tammuz saw Cybele with the king, and he remembered how much he loved her. And when Cybele saw Tammuz, she remembered how much she loved him."

"But they never talked."

"They didn't have to talk. But they knew how they felt, regardless. So, when the king saw the way that Tammuz looked at Cybele and the way that Cybele looked back at Tammuz, he became even more jealous because he knew that they truly loved each other."

"But how can you stop love, mamma?"

"That was the problem, my son. You can't stop it. Even death can't stop it." She paused and folded her hands in her lap. "Even death can't stop it. Your father is dead now four years, and I still love him. I love his memory, and I love his shadow in you and your brother and your sister."

"If love is that strong, how could the king stop Cybele from loving our lord Tammuz?"

"He thought he could stop it. He took Cybele away from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mountains so she would not see the god Tammuz. He thought she would forget about him. But he soon saw that she only remembered him the more, and he knew he would have to do something else."

"What did he do?"

"Well, he knew one thing for certain. He knew that he wanted to keep Cybele only for himself, and he knew that he could not as long as the god Tammuz was alive."

"But you said that our lord Tammuz did not want to take the queen away from her husband."

"No, he did not want to take her away. But he soon saw that she was not happy, that she was staying with the king against her will, that she had to be saved. So the king locked Cybele in the palace because he knew that there was real feeling between Tammuz and Cybele. He thought about nothing else. And at last he realized that as long as the god Tammuz was alive, the queen would love Tammuz and not him. So, one day the king decided that he would have to kill the god Tammuz. But he knew that he would have to do it in such a way that Cybele would never know that he did it."

"But how could he do that?"

"He thought of many schemes. Finally, he decided he would disguise himself so that no one would recognize him and then he would hunt down the god Tammuz in the mountains."

"But how could he do that?"

"The king could do that because he possessed a magic secret that would let him become anything he chose. He had that power. So, one day he changed into a wild pig and went into the mountains to find the god Tammuz."

"Did Tammuz know he was coming?"

"No, he knew nothing."

"Was he surprised?"

"He never saw the wild pig until it was almost upon him, and then it was too late. The wild pig had tusks that were as sharp as machetes. The god Tammuz had no chance to protect himself or to escape." She paused and flexed her hands gently in her lap. "When the king saw that Tammuz was dead, he changed into himself again. Then he had to think of some way to hide the body. He remembered that there were some savage women who lived high in the mountains. He summoned them and told them to dispose of the body of the god Tammuz. These women were wild, and they fought among themselves to see who would have the honor of doing the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

king's bidding. They continued to fight over the body of Tammuz. They fought and fought until they tore the body of Tammuz into pieces, and then each of the women threw her piece of the body into the river. The one who threw the head of Tammuz into the river watched and watched to see if it would sink, but it never sank. It kept floating toward the sea, and it slowly changed the color of the water around it until the entire river was red. And then the sea turned red. And all of a sudden the head of the god Tammuz began to sing from the sea. It sang beautiful songs. And as it sang, the mountains began to bloom with small red flowers. In a few hours all the mountains were covered with red flowers. It was as if the god Tammuz had changed into a song, and then the song had changed into flowers. And ever since then the mountains in the spring are covered with flowers, and we even call the small red flowers the wounds of Tammuz."

"And what happened to the king?"

"His magic failed him, and soon the queen Cybele realized that he had killed the one she loved. So the queen from that day grieved for the god Tammuz until she died. And the king finally was changed back into a wild pig, and he was condemned to hide in the mountains. He has been there until this day. And the flowers of Tammuz are also there."

"I must say that I don't exactly see the connection between that story and what you've been trying to tell me about the situation here'" says Constantine.

"At first glance, perhaps, there's no connection. But if you think about it as our people think about it, the connection is quite clear. You see, the shepherd named Tammuz really stands for all us here, all the people. He likes what we like. He is a private man. He loves his country. And he is a poet and a singer. Those are the qualities that we admire most in a man here. We admire those things that are on the side of life."

"And the pig is the villain?"

"Not only the villain. The pig is on the side of death. He wants to dominate life, not live it. If he can't dominate, then he tries to thwart. If he can't dominate or thwart, then he kills. That is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his fate. He has the flaw of all those who are on the side of death. He cannot recognize real love between others. That is his flaw. He thinks that only he has the power over life and love. But life and love eventually betray him."

"And the queen?"

"The queen is whatever inspires our love. We have always believed that the queen and our country are one and the same." Melchior pauses and looks for some hint of understanding in Constantine's eyes. "Are you beginning to see?"

"Very vaguely. You have to remember that I'm just a lawyer. I never pretended to be a poet."

"You needn't be a poet, Mr. Constantine. All you have to be is human. For us, life and poetry are alike." He pauses. "Let me give you a few hints. You have to keep in mind that the king or the pig seeks to force his wife to love him when in fact she loves another. The king then thinks that he can solve the problem by killing the shepherd. And, as the story goes, he does. But the shepherd is not killed by death. He goes on and on. It is the king who is defeated. He loses his queen. He loses his identity. He ends with nothing." Melchior smiles and waits. "Our usual interpretation of the story in recent years is that our country has been wedded to a pig, and that she is simply waiting for someone to save her."

"Does that mean that you are the shepherd?"

"Not necessarily. The shepherd is the spirit in all of us that permits us to continue loving our country even in its present circumstances. No one wants to be a pig. We prefer the restraint of the shepherd, even if it means living with anguish for a time. We are still free."

"But you've gone beyond restraint."

"But I never said I was the god Tammuz, Mr. Constantine. My ambitions are purely mortal, not immortal."

"But that's still not exactly a denial."

"I leave the interpretation to you. If you were an exile in your own country, you'd understand. That's what I am. I even wrote a poem about it. In fact, the poem caused my arrest. I wrote it as if it were addressed to a phoenix about the woman I loved, but it was really about my country. It was given a wide circulation and even put to music. By the sheerest coincidence, I wrote under the penname of Tammuz. It took the censors several weeks to make the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

connection. But by that time it was too late. Everybody knew by heart the poem about Tammuz and the phoenix, Tammuz and his beloved."

"Just for the sake of the record, Melchior, was there ever really such a woman for you?"

"Of course not."

"Ever?"

Melchior looks at Constantine curiously. After a moment he smiles. "Are you trying to find out if I'm . . .human?"

"Something like that."

"Why?"

"Just to satisfy an old theory of mine. I've always thought that most of the devout progressives of this world were at heart strict puritans. I mean they were usually men who let nothing come between them and their missions—not love, not children, not a hobby, not a thing. It didn't matter if the mission were good or bad. I could name you some famous criminals who were puritans. And some saints as well."

"And revolutionaries?"

"Yes, revolutionaries. Revolutionaries particularly."

"In that case, Mr. Constantine, I qualify. But I qualify for the wrong reasons." He pauses. "You see, there are only two fatal enemies for me. Death and love. Death is my enemy because it will stop me. Love is my enemy because it will distract me."

"You see—the perfect puritan."

"But the real reason why death and love are my enemies is that I don't like what happens to me when I am confronted by either one of them. I tend to act like a fool, and, frankly, I have no time for foolishness. It's not unique to me, by the way. Most people act the same way. Some try to guard themselves against this by actually rehearsing for one or the other. They try to rehearse for death. They rehearse for love. But it's simply a waste of time. One or the other will trap us in the end, and, when we are trapped, we become like idiots. Look at the faces of dying men or lovers. Then look at a real idiot. The expressions of all of them are identical."

"So you try to postpone being trapped as long as you can. Correct?"

"As long as I can and as well as I can. It's the only way I can function."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But what you're doing now is hardly a way to guarantee a long life."

"It's a matter of opinion, really." He waits. "Suppose I asked you what you regarded as the most dangerous profession today. What would your answer be?"

"Something like yours, perhaps. Something associated with killing or being killed."

"Quite wrong, Mr. Constantine. Belligerents die, I grant you, but they don't die in great numbers." He pauses. "I think the most dangerous profession today is not taking a position, not committing yourself to something, not becoming something other than an innocent bystander. Tell me—who are the ones who die by the hundreds and thousands every year throughout the entire world? Innocent bystanders, I assure you."

"Well, I wouldn't say that what you're doing here is exactly without risk."

"No, it's not without risk. But it is without illusions. I realized some years ago that I had no alternative but to be what I am. When other people have designs on you, you have no alternative but to oppose them. One warrior creates another. After all, we're all at war. Country by country throughout the world—all at war in one way or another, within or without. But the real wars from now on are not the ones that are spelled in capital letters and given numbers—not any more. The real wars of today and the future are those that happen after the so-called real wars are over. Little wars, guerilla wars—these are the ones that matter, that decide. Look at Mao. Look at the writings of Che or Lawrence of the Arabs. Look at Ho Chi Minh or Camillo Torres. They understood this. It used to be that wars ended when armies were defeated in the field. But that age is over forever. Those old victories and defeats are mere formalities now—part of the total struggle. And the total struggle is against overseers everywhere." He slaps his knee with his open hand. "Do you realize that 2,500,000,000 of the 3,500,000,000 people on this planet live under governments like this one? That's a rather high percentage, wouldn't you say? And that's why the struggle against them is just starting and will simply go on and on."

"Where does it end?"

"It cannot end. If the struggle ends or slackens, that is a sign of death. That's true even in biology, isn't it? Where there is struggle,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there is life. Where there is life, there is struggle. That simple principle is what your country never has accepted—never can accept."

"I think we've accepted it. But we've accepted it in a different tradition."

"Tradition? Tradition? All you talk of is tradition! But what kind of tradition do you really have? You lose more lives to murder every year in New York City than they do in all of Europe and Asia combined. Do you think there's no inner war in America? Do you think everything is the way it seems in your idiotic films or on the Voice of America?"

Constantine is silent while Melchior stares at him with his last question still burning in his eyes.

"Believe me, my American friend," whispers Melchior after a long pause. "Nothing is the way you think it is. Nothing is the way it seems any more. Nothing is the same."

Constantine waits until the mood softens. "You may be right, but I'm still not quite ready to lump everything in the total struggle. The world didn't begin when we were born, you know. There were a few struggles of note that happened before that. We might even learn a few things from them."

"We might. But that doesn't mean that we lay down our arms. That doesn't mean that we let history take its course."

"Well, it would make me think twice about revolutions if I knew that every revolution since the fall of the Bastille has managed to betray its original principles. There does seem to be a cycle in these affairs."

"Every revolution?"

"Every one so far. Liberty, fraternity and equality ended with Napoleon. Marx and Stalin would have found it difficult to speak to one another."

"Do you exclude yourselves?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you think that you have betrayed Jefferson?"

"I don't know if we've betrayed him, but I think we should re-read him. But I see your point. No, I don't exempt the United States. I think our experiment is still just that—an experiment."

"What you're saying in so many words is that every revolution has failed so far but yours."

"Perhaps I am. At least I hope so. I didn't say that revolutions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have to fail. They can be betrayed, which is what usually happens, but they can also be won. And they can be won by struggling on for what they really mean." Constantine stops and notices that Melchior is smiling at him.

"Mr. Constantine," says Melchior, still smiling. "That language sounds quite familiar. In fact, what you said sounds almost like a quote. And the man you're quoting is facing you this very minute."

"I'm talking about peaceful struggle, not force, not murder, not violence."

"Mr. Constantine, what you call peaceful struggle is sometimes a contradiction in terms. The nature of the struggle always depends on the enemy you are confronting. It's regrettable to say, but your enemy dictates the tactics you must use. Take the British in India a generation or so ago, for example. Ghandi's tactics worked with the British, and he was spared violent action. But do you think for a moment that non-violence would have worked against the Nazis? Do you believe that for a moment?"

Feeling the force of the comparison, Constantine nods no.

"Against fascists," continues Melchior, "you have to use other, stronger tactics. That's the conclusion I've been forced to reach. I don't even consider the ethics of the matter. All I can work for are results, regardless."

"I simply can't accept that for myself. I never could."

"Damn it, I'm not asking you to accept it for yourself! All I am asking is that you understand it for us!"

"I think it's possible for you, but I think that you have to live with the consequences."

"Very well, we will live with the consequences!"

"My problem, if I were you, would be to live with the consequences of my own actions. I mean if I planted a timebomb or a grenade, for example, in some crowded place, and if the thing blew up and killed a child or one of those innocent bystanders you were mentioning earlier . . ."

"That's precisely why no one can be innocent now."

". . . but if it killed a child or someone who was completely innocent, it would probably drive me mad in time even if I could have made a case in the first place for putting the explosive where I put it. In other words, could I look at the blown-out face of a child or the burned eyes of someone else and say, well, it was worth it? It was worth it for the cause. Could I say that? Can you say that?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You share my brother's flaw, Mr. Constantine."

"Maybe I do, but that's the way I am. If I were in your position, I'd try to find a different way to fight and just take my chances."

Melchior faces the wall. After a moment he turns and says, "You make me admire you, Mr. Constantine. You've been honest with me. It takes courage to be honest, and courage is one thing I admire most in the world. But your honesty, even if it's enough for you, is not enough for the facts here. It would be wonderful if circumstances permit us to fight as we choose, but some things make that impossible. Some things make that impossible even for those who would like to think otherwise."

"Perhaps it's because they don't believe in it enough."

"It's not a question of belief. It's a question of survival. It's not just a matter of applying principles and book-rules to situations. I used to think like that, but that is simply a luxury in relation to survival. Besides, books are not the only teachers." He sits in the chair and scowls for a moment. "There are other teachers." He covers his face with both hands as if he were rubbing the sleep from his eyes. When he puts his hands down, he looks at Constantine as if he were addressing him for the first time. His tone, his expression, his eyes, his limply dangling hands give him a look, not of ease, but of exhaustion . . . of the acceptance of exhaustion. "Let me describe an incident, Mr. Constantine, that happened to one of our number—not recently, but many years ago. This man was then a boy of eight. One night he was alone with his mother when two soldiers—soldiers of this same government, by the way—burst into the house. They both had been drinking. The boy's mother was not a woman who was easily terrified, especially in her own house, and she demanded to know immediately what the soldiers wanted. When they laughed in her face, she ordered them to leave. Their answer was to spit on her. It was not just a gesture. It was real spitting. The boy, meanwhile, sees all this. He sees his mother seize a kitchen knife, but the soldiers overpower her before she can use it. The boy rushes the soldiers and kicks and tries to push them away from his mother. One of the soldiers kicks the boy in that place where one kick is enough, and the boy collapses in a corner. The pain between his legs makes him forget everything for a moment. When he opens his eyes, he is watching the two soldiers spreadeagle his mother face-down on the kitchen table. To make sure she does not scream, one of the soldiers forces an onion in her mouth. The other shreds

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her clothes, little by little. Together the soldiers hold her fast by the hair and the legs and pour flour from an urn on the table all over her. One of them draws something in the flour with his finger. The other unzips himself and tries to enter her from the rear like a burro, but he is unable. He falls to the floor, and the other soldier laughs at him. The soldier who has fallen rises to his feet, swearing. He takes the kitchen knife that has fallen from the table and thrusts it with all his strength into the very middle of the woman's back. Her struggles cease all of a sudden, and the flour on her shoulders and back thickens slowly into a red mud. The boy sees that. He hears his baby sister crying in the next room. He tries to stand up, but his legs won't hold him. He watches the soldiers stuff bread and peppers into their tunics. One of them leaves. The other, kicking over a chair, follows him. The boy is left there with his mother's body. His sister is still whimpering. The boy crawls painfully to the kitchen table and tries to wipe away the flour. For some reason, that's all he wants to do. He just wants to wipe the reddening flour from the skin of his mother."

Constantine watches Melchior stare at the wall opposite him as if the entire drama is being re-enacted there. Melchior coughs into his hand and lapses again into an attitude of conscious exhaustion.

"That's a brutal story," says Constantine finally. He studies Melchior for a moment. "It's a terrible story, but what does it have to do with what we've been saying?"

"Everything," says Melchior without raising his head.

"How?"

Melchior looks up at Constantine. His falcon eyes have lost their brightness. "I was that boy, Mr. Constantine."

Melchior wiped the blood and flour from his hands and ran to find his sister when he heard the first explosion. The pain in his groin had eased, but he still had to hobble slightly. When he entered the bedroom, he saw the little girl huddled on her bed, whimpering.

"Get up, Teresa. Get up. We must go to the mountains."

"No," the girl screamed.

"Hurry."

"Where is Sebastian?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He is already in the mountains. Hurry. We will find him there." The girl did not stir. "Please, Teresa. There is no time. They are coming back."

"Why are you crying?" she asked.

"Come, Teresa." He seized her by the hand and started for the kitchen before he realized what awaited him there. He turned and almost dragged his sister out the back door and across the yard. When he reached the heaped dung behind the chicken coop, he stopped and crouched beside the fence so that he had a clear view of the entire village. Suddenly there was another explosion, and a small house halfway down the main street collapsed into itself. It simply rose for an instant and then crumbled as if an enormous fist had landed deadcenter on the roof. Still crouching, Melchior watched the marauding soldiers order the families from the adjoining houses into the street and prod them with bayonets in the direction of the fields. The soldiers fired occasional shots at the heels of the fleeing villagers to hurry them on. House by house the soldiers followed the same procedure. Soon the boy could see all the people from the village running singly or in small groups through the fields toward the mountains.

"What's happening?" asked his sister and began to cry again.

"The soldiers are destroying the houses. They are destroying the whole village."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

There was a third explosion, and another house buckled. The boy then saw the soldiers wheel a small cannon down the center of the street. He had never seen a cannon with so short a barrel. By the time they reached the square, the soldiers swung the cannon into position so that the barrel was pointing almost straight up into the sky but tilting slightly in the direction of the fields where the villagers were running. Melchior watched while one of the soldiers dropped a shell down the mouth of the barrel and then ducked. There was a whooosh, and an instant later there was an explosion in the middle of the field where the people were running. The explosion forced up a geyser of soil and wheat, and Melchior thought he saw the body of a man in the middle of the geyser. Then he looked back at the square just in time to see the soldier drop a second shell down the short barrel.

Still holding his sister by the hand, he crawled beside the chicken

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coop until he was sure he could not be seen from the street. Just as he was about to run, he heard another explosion and turned to see the roof of his own house rise and shatter. He fell on top of his sister while bits of tin roof clattered in a loud rain all around them. The little girl was screaming uncontrollably, and Melchior, remembering the body of his mother in the house that was no longer there, kept blinking back his tears. Then he tugged his sister to her feet and, favoring the tug in his groin, began to run with her through the wheat toward the foothills of the mountains. He knew many hiding places there, and he felt he would be safe. Then he would find his brother.

As Melchior ran, he thought again of his mother in the ruined house. He stopped. He heard the distant whoosh of the cannon. Tightening his grip around his sister's hand, he turned to run again in the direction of the mountains. An explosion to his right made him veer instinctively to his left, but he still kept running. His sister was screaming behind him. He almost had to pull her by the hand after him so as not to break stride. Another shell landed to his right, and he was toppled by the concussion. He squeezed his sister's hand, stood up and kept running. She was no longer pulling against him now, and he was able to run faster. The trees in the foothills loomed before him like columns of a temple, and in a matter of seconds he was in the midst of them. He ran farther until he reached a spot where the woods were thick and dark. He felt as if there were a dagger in his groin. He dropped to his knees. It was only then that he realized that his sister was no longer crying. He squeezed her hand and turned toward her. But all he was holding was a hand.

"I was that boy also, Mr. Constantine."

Constantine is silent. His mind is locked on the image of a youngster holding a little girl's hand—just the hand. He shakes his head from side to side. "Terrible," he says at last.

"It was more than terrible." Melchior stands and walks back and forth a few times. Slowly the sense of exhaustion leaves his eyes. When he turns to face Constantine again, he again has the stare of a falcon. "I tried to tell you the story quite dispassionately, don't you think?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Constantine is unable to adapt to his change of mood, and he looks at Melchior with an expression of both surprise and incredulity.

"You needn't be concerned about my feelings, Mr. Constantine."

"Yes," answers Constantine, "under the circumstances, I think you spoke as well as anyone could expect."

"Suppose we include my story in our discussion about justice."

"Come, now," says Constantine. "There's no need. . ."

"But there is a need."

"But that's a closed book. You know what I think. As far as I'm concerned, the discussion's over."

"No, Mr. Constantine. It's just beginning." He takes a step closer. "Tell me, what would you have done if you had been that boy in the mountains?"

"Do you expect me to answer that?"

"Absolutely."

"But that's really not the point, is it?"

"It's the only point." Melchior steps even closer. "Would you have waited for the law to give you satisfaction?"

"Did you?"

"That's not what I'm asking you."

"Well, in my country there are some strong laws against rape and murder and plunder . . ."

"But you're not answering my question, damn it. I'm not asking you for references. I'm asking you what you would have done."

"What can I say? You had an experience that was terrible beyond words. Who would deny that?"

"Many would deny it, Mr. Constantine. Many . . ."

"Who, for God's sake?"

"The two soldiers, for example."

"Weren't they ever arrested and tried?"

Melchior's laugh is short and staccato. "Arrested? Tried?" He laughs again until he has to cough. "Mr. Constantine, I have the pleasure of informing you that one of the two soldiers is none other than Colonel Valero, the commander of the Chief of State's private army."

"And the other soldier?"

"The other soldier died of an accident seven years ago."

"Did you arrange the accident?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"With my own hands. And would you like to know how long it took him to die? Thirty-nine hours and twenty minutes."

"And did that in any way ease the pain of your memory?"

"Only half of it."

"And the other half?"

"The other half is Colonel Valero."

"And he needs another so-called accident?"

"Precisely."

"An eye for an eye."

"If you want to put it that way, very well. I prefer to see it as the act of the second swordsman." He waits until Constantine remembers the reference. "That's the way I choose to see it."

Constantine shrugs. He looks at the floor and shrugs again. Finally, he says, "I can understand your feelings in this. At least, I think I can, but that kind of justice never really rights the scales. There's always someone who can consider himself the second swordsman, if you want to put it that way." He pauses. "Sometimes there's nothing to do except to admit the damage that has already been done. We can't redress every wrong, never exactly. Most of the time there's really nothing to do but ascribe things to the fact that life's tragic to begin with. If we admit that, we can leave the rest to the law. We have to let the law save us from ourselves."

"Save us from ourselves?"

"Yes, save us from thinking we are the law, save us from trying to rectify wrongs by our own standards."

"But who has the greater right?"

"The law."

"More than the man wronged?"

"I would say so, yes. The man wronged would simply have to learn to resign himself. It would be better for him to let other forces become involved and take their course."

"Resign himself?" Melchior shouts and strikes his forehead with his hand. "Mr. Constantine, do you know what it means to have the worst possible thing happen before your eyes? Do you know what it means to watch it happening and to know that you can do nothing but watch it happen? How can I resign myself? How? For years I've dreamed that scene over and over. In my dream I can't look my mother in the face. I can't forget how light my sister's hand was."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Constantine looks at the floor.

"May God destroy me," swears Melchior, ". . . may God destroy me if I ever resign myself. I swear on the soul of my mother that I will never resign myself. You don't know what that means because you never felt it. If what happened was because of a hurricane or an earthquake or even a wild animal, I somehow could come to resign myself. But this was done by men. This was done by two men. You can't understand that because you weren't there. It never touched you in your skin."

"If it ever did," says Constantine, "I'd like to think that I'd be the same man somehow, that I wouldn't. . ."

"Yes, you'd *like* to think that. But the facts won't let you think that. The facts change you. At first, you resist because you can feel yourself changing. And then after a while you get used to it. And then you let the change happen. You even *want* to change."

"I've always believed that in the final analysis every man can somehow survive that, if he tries. It's not easy, but it can be. . ."

"God damn you, Constantine! God damn you! You speak to me as if you've been through everything, as if you understand everything. What have you seen in your life? What? And now you come down here with your wife and your reputation so that you can tell us what is right and what is wrong. But you understand nothing."

"Listen," says Constantine, coloring, "you asked me for my opinions about justice, and I've given them to you as honestly as possible under the circumstances. You just want me to agree with you, and I can't. That's all there is to it."

"You can. If you really see the situation here and feel it in your blood, you can. If you faced it yourself, you would be no different than I am. We would be the same, I assure you."

"That's your opinion, not mine."

"We shall see," says Melchior, walking to the door. He opens it and talks quickly to the soldiers there. Then he returns to Constantine with the three soldiers a step or so behind him. As they pass Constantine, Melchior steps aside, and the soldiers overpower Constantine in a matter of seconds. Keeping him in the chair, they thong his wrists to the chair's arms, and his ankles to the chair's legs. Melchior shouts in dialect in the direction of the door, and two other soldiers pull Constantine's wife into the room. They march her toward a plain wooden table in the corner of the room opposite Constantine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Zav!" she screams.

The soldiers half-push and half-carry her to the table and, holding her firmly by the wrists and ankles, pull her facedown over the top of it.

"I'm about to give you a lesson in my kind of justice, Mr. Constantine," says Melchior. "It may not seem as civilized as yours, but it is much older and much more reliable."

"I thought you told me you weren't barbarians," mutters Constantine. He pulls at his bonds with a lurch so that the chair falls forward. He keeps tugging as the chair hits and tips, leaving him still seated with his left cheek touching the floor.

"Mr. Constantine, you insist on fighting the obvious. If you prefer that position, so be it. You may have it. It's as good a place to spectate as any." He kicks the chair so that Constantine skids a few inches farther on his cheek. He turns to Constantine's wife, removes a scarf from her hair, wads it into a ball and rams it into her mouth. At that moment Rosa enters the room. She gasps and speaks in dialect to Melchior. He answers her curtly, also in dialect, and she leaves. "First, Mr. Constantine, I present you with a victim, namely, your wife. Now she is not just any victim. She is your wife, Mr. Constantine. She is obviously someone who means a great deal to you. But she is at the moment a victim nonetheless. Moreover, she has in no way invited this situation. She certainly has not brought it on herself. Let us say that she is a victim simply because she is a victim. Her only real credential is innocence."

"For Christ's sake, let her go," shouts Constantine.

"Come now, Mr. Constantine. You are losing your composure. You are losing your judicial temperament. I have done nothing to your wife yet, have I?"

"Let her go!"

"Well, Mr. Constantine," says Melchior, stooping so that he can look at Constantine in the face, "I agree with you that your wife is in quite an awkward circumstance. As a matter of straight fact, she is quite helpless. One woman who is being held by two rather robust men is hardly in a position to resist, is she? As a further matter of fact, we could almost do whatever we wanted to do to her—or to you—and neither of you could do a thing about it."

"What have we done to you?"

"That's precisely the point. You have done nothing to me. We are practically strangers. We've met by the sheerest accident.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We've talked. We've shared our views. I have nothing against you, really."

"Then why are you doing this?"

"But I haven't done anything. I haven't done a single thing. . . yet." He stands midway between Constantine and his wife. "I want you to notice that your wife has stopped resisting. The gag must be quite uncomfortable for her, and I'm sure that she is as concerned about you as you are for her."

"Stop this. Stop it, for God's sake!"

Melchior turns his back on Constantine and approaches his wife. "Your wife's dress is really just a beach garment, Mr. Constantine. If I wanted to, I could split it into shreds by grabbing it here and just pulling downward. Shall I show you how it could be done? It would take very little effort. Shall I show you?"

"You bastard. You damned bastard."

"And when I finished with the dress, I could do the same with her underthings. It would take almost no effort at all. And then . . ."

"Let her go, God damn you."

"Careful, Mr. Constantine. You're pulling so hard against those thongs that you've caused your wrists to bleed. But why are you getting so excited? After I've finished amusing myself with your wife, we can sit down together and have a long discussion about exactly what I did. I can tell you to resign yourself. I can tell you that there are laws against this kind of thing, that there are arrests and trials, that there is punishment. We can talk about the law, and you can tell me how the law will take its course, et cetera, et cetera . . ."

"If you do anything to her, I'll kill you if it takes me the rest of my life. I swear to God I will. I'll make you wish you'd never been born."

"Such melodrama, Mr. Constantine. Such strong language. Such threats. It seems so out of character for you. I expected you to say something else. I'm really disappointed in you."

"I'll kill you with my bare hands, I swear it!"

"My, how American that sounds! Or is it un-American? But Mr. Constantine, there is hardly anything I've done so far to justify murder. I've insinuated a few things, but I've done nothing. I haven't even sounded threatening. And no matter what I decide to do, I'm sure you agree that there is some jury somewhere or other

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that might deal with me eventually. After all, there is the law." He returns to Constantine's wife. "Watch very carefully, Mr. Constantine. I want you to see everything that is about to happen to your wife."

"God damn you, don't lay a hand on her. I'm warning you. . ."

"You're warning me!"

Constantine edges on his cheek an inch or two in the direction of Melchior and stops, exhausted. The veins in his neck are rigid as cords. He twists his head from side to side and tugs at the thongs to free himself.

"If you touch her," he screams. "I'll kill you!"

Melchior snaps his fingers at the three guards who have been waiting near the door. Together they lift Constantine from the floor and set him upright but still tethered in the chair. When they finish, they return to the door. Melchior walks toward Constantine, who is sweating so that drops fall from his eyebrows. He is breathing deeply and grimacing in spasms of helplessness.

"Did you hear what you just said, Mr. Constantine?" shouts Melchior. All the tantalizing sarcasm is gone from his tone now, and he speaks like a soldier giving orders. "Did you hear what you said to me? You said you would kill me. Did you hear yourself say that? And you meant it, Mr. Constantine. You meant it." He steps back one pace. "Where is all your philosophy now? Where is all your talk about fairness and due process and all the other shit you were telling me an hour ago? Where is it? Now," he says and stops for a second, "now do you know what it means to taste hatred like blood on your tongue?"

Slowly, degree by degree and muscle by muscle, Constantine goes limp in the chair.

"Remember this moment, Mr. Constantine. Remember how you feel right now. Remember what you're capable of doing right now." He turns to the soldiers who are still pinioning Constantine's wife to the table. "Take the scarf out of her mouth and let her up. Yes, take it out now and let her up. Gently." He faces Constantine again. "We are not barbarians. I had no intention of harming your wife." He speaks to the soldiers by the door. "I've told my men to release you, Mr. Constantine. I will leave you and your wife alone for a few minutes. I think you might need that. It will be dark in a matter of hours, and you can return to the mainland." With that he goes to the door while the soldiers untie the thongs around Con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stantine's wrists and ankles. "I will be back in half an hour, Mr. Constantine. We might have a few more things to say to one another then."

My phoenix
I learn with you
the banishment that murders me
in ruins and the sheerest voids.
I break from jail
to seek the man I keep becoming.
I leave the gate ajar,
the chain empty,
and the darkness of my cell
devours me like eyes in shadow.

Though banished,
I remember those who banished me,
who crowned my brow with chains
and waited to betray me.
I see my childhood
like an isolated temple
with its longing pillars,
and I burn.
Horizon by horizon,
I am born to the chants of the sun.

My new wings grow
like yours, my phoenix.

Phoenix, we are born for death,
and death in life
deserves its springs and harvests,
its rivering Jesus,

its passion with the vineyard
and the mount.
But it is not all solitude
and echoes from the grave.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jan

"As a foreign correspondent, I'd spent many years, before I was married, in Europe, Asia, South America, the Caribbean, almost everywhere except the poles. But I was always an observer. In fact, that's really how I came to regard myself—a professional observer. I was never really involved as a participant in any of the stories I covered, and I deliberately kept myself out of all the reports I sent back to the states. I developed a good, lean style, which is just another way of saying that I kept myself out of the way of the reader and the subject. Objective. Clean. Practically impersonal. Needless to say, I came to be regarded as a rather good reporter.

"All that training is what makes it difficult for me to tell you what actually happened. The main difference is that what happened actually happpened to Zav and me. Neither of us were observers. It wasn't just that we were involved, but the whole experience came to be a matter of life and death, a matter of survival.

"After we were taken prisoner, I still found myself trying to stay objective, as if I were just a spectator on my own drama. Somehow I wasn't as afraid as I thought I should be. And I was told time and time again that nothing would happen to us. The guard kept telling me, 'We are not barbarians.' But when you suddenly find yourself in captivity, your imagination just can't settle for that kind of assurance. It was the first time in my life that I really felt a loss of freedom. I wasn't allowed to see my husband for hours. I had to stay where I was told. It left a mark on me, I think. Of course, it left more of a mark on Zav, but there were and are different reasons for him. And, to be frank, I think that it left quite a mark on the country where we were. According to the last reports, there are tremendous changes taking place there, grass-root changes, basic changes.

"I suppose the best way to understand what happened is to start from the first day. When we first arrived and headed for our hotel, I really felt scared, which is unusual for me. I'd felt the same kind of fear before in Cairo, in parts of Mexico City and in Port-au-Prince. It's nothing that lends itself to words. It's just that suddenly you find yourself in the middle of a country that's crowded and edged with real poverty. It's the kind of poverty you can't forget.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Anyway, we arrived in the middle of a carnival in that kind of country. The atmosphere was spiced with celebration. No one was indoors. Fireworks were exploding all over the sky like antiaircraft fire. Armed soldiers were milling with the crowds. Our taxi had to snail its way through surging, sweating, singing, drinking people. It was like an Orson Welles film. I felt that a shot would go off at any moment and leave the taxi driver slumped over the wheel with blood spurting from a neat bullethole behind his right ear. It was that kind of atmosphere. My husband sensed what was happening to me and tried to distract me, but that feeling of fear, now that I think of it, stayed with me the whole time I was in the country. I can even feel it now while I'm telling you about it.

"As I said before, I've had the same feeling before in other places. In Cairo once I was visiting the pyramids at Giza when I felt a hand at my sleeve. I turned to see an old Arab being led by a boy. The old man had one of those Middle Eastern diseases of the eye that made his pupils appear to be drowning in dirty milk. He kept holding my sleeve and regarding me with those terrible eyes. Finally, the boy spoke to him softly in Arabic and tried to lead him away from me. All at once the man turned on the boy and swung at him with more strength than I thought he had. Then he spat at the boy, who, by the way, never stepped back and never flinched. He just kept putting himself between the old man and myself as if he were trying to shield me from what I later accepted as the kind of reality that one should expect to find sometimes in Egypt. I walked away from the two of them, but the incident kept coming back to me—in dreams mostly but not always, and each time it re-occurred it brought with it a chill that went through me like an electrocution. It was as if the mask had suddenly been removed from an otherwise inconspicuous scene and revealed for just an instant an irrefuteable world that showed the customary one for the sham it really was. Something similar happened to me in Mexico City several months later. I was near the Avenida Benito Juarez on New Year's Eve. I was walking beneath all the tinsel and banners and fireworks when I noticed a small boy squatting on the curb. He was wrapped in a serape, and he had a white sombrero on his head. I saw that he was an Indian, and he had one of the most delicate and beautiful faces I had ever seen in my life. I couldn't take my eyes off him. He just huddled there in his serape, and occasionally a passerby would drop a coin in his palm. With each coin he collected, his expression

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

changed. His face hardened into a knot. His hand disppeared into the folds of his serape with his token, deposited it somewhere within and returned empty for more alms. And with each return, the boy's expression became that of a boy again. Occasionally a pedestrian would trip over the boy, or else some roisterer, not seeing him at all, would inadvertantly kick him and then go on. But the boy never left his station, his job, his life. Years later, another incident of this kind happened to me in Haiti, in Port-au-Prince to be exact. I went there reluctantly. I can't face abject poverty, and in Haiti there is poverty beyond description. On the way from the ship to the dock, a vender in a small boat was hawking those goat-skinned, mahogony drums that are so common there. I bought one, and immediately the same man offered me his infant son to take with me. He actually offered him to me—his son. No questions asked. Can you imagine that? In any case, I found myself on the following day in the company of a group of German tourists. At one point on the road we stopped because one of the men wanted to photograph a village woman who was walking in her bare feet on the rocky side of the road. Balanced on her head were eight baskets. Her dress was a brown rag. Slung around her neck was a baby who was nursing from one of her elongated breasts. The photographer motioned for her to come closer, and she did. After he photographed her, he waved to her and smiled. But she moved suddenly closer, snapping her fingers and rubbing them together to indicate that she wanted money. The man smiled, and the woman kept rubbing her fingers together. Meanwhile, the baby tugged and sucked at her nipple. She could have been under bombardment or firing a pistol, and the little mouth would have kept working. Her lips twisted into a snarl. And there it was again, that quick flash of the real beneath the visible. No disguising it. No denying it. It was all the same—the slap in Egypt, the clutch in Mexico, the snarl in Haiti. The animal within decides to reveal itself all of a sudden, ready or not. Somehow it paralyzes me when I confront it.

"I had the same sense of expectation when Zav and I taxied to our hotel through the fireworks and the swarms of people and the soldiers. It's the same feeling you have when you're swimming in the ocean, and you suddenly stroke into a patch of frigid water. It seems to clutch at your skin, shrinking you, drawing you into itself. At best it just tolerates you until you manage to swim out of it.

"The hotel was a kind of oasis. The rooms were Hiltonesque, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the service was prompt. I told Zav that we were just like islanders, floating through the country on a little island of credit cards and letters of introduction and dollars. He made light of it, but it was true, and we both knew it.

"On one side of the hotel was a street of casinos. Opposite the rear of the hotel was a street of night clubs and you-name-it. On the right side were several hovels where people actually lived. And in front of the hotel, in front of the blue-and-yellow-spangled arch and vestibule and gingerbread was *la mer,* and it was beautiful. We had a view of it from the room. From one side of the bay to the other were fishing boats and yachts and motor launches and ferries at tether. Of course, we discovered this on the following day. That first night we just showered ourselves free of all those hours in the air and proceeded to sleep off the trip.

"The following day—the day before we were taken prisoner—my husband had a number of briefings with American officials and then spent the afternoon and evening with a man named DeNubia, who used to be the cultural attaché there. Meanwhile, DeNubia's wife escorted me to a flea market. All I can say about that entire afternoon is that I took an instinctive dislike to La DeNubia and maintained it more or less consistently until we parted. She despised the people of the country. She made it a point to tell me that she did all her shopping at the American commissary in order to avoid what she called 'the local diseases.' When we reached the flea market, she marched through it like a Sears and Roebuck Cleopatra, expecting people to part before her—and surprisingly they did. I found the entire time with her a cross between a bore (when we were alone) and an embarrassment (when we were with others).

"My husband later told me that her husband was of the same skimpy cut. He was simply putting in time there until he could draw a pension. But still he was *the* cultural attaché. We learned here and there that his idea of culture was an occasional free screening of a Hollywood western or importing and distributing remaindered textbooks to the local schools. I know a little about books and publishing, and I saw with my own eyes a small warehouse filled with outdated books on various subjects and technologies that had been dumped into the country by some desperate publisher who was interested in a write-off. Distributing that junk was DeNubia's idea of culture. . . .

"On our second night in the country, we slept off our respective

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

briefings, and the following day, partly to escape any other rather extended 'briefings,' we went to the beach and then for a sail. And that's where the real story begins. Somehow we just let ourselves sail out of sight of land, and before we realized it we had run aground on an island far out in the bay. When Zav went above deck to investigate, he ran into an armed soldier. The soldier kept his rifle trained on Zav after Zav called me on deck, and we were more or less invited to follow the soldier into the interior. So we went. Actually he followed us, and I could feel the gun trained on us the entire way up the path that we were using. Once I turned around. I could still see the beach where we had run aground. Several of our guard's companions were trying to pull our boat farther ashore so that it would be less conspicuous. They weren't having too much success. That probably explains how we were discovered, but that comes much later. Meanwhile, we just kept walking at gunpoint through the bush and farther up a twisting goatpath until we reached a hut in a clearing near the top of the mountain. There we were abruptly separated. Zav was taken to see someone who, I learned afterward, was the commander, a man named Melchior. I was escorted to a portico on one side of the hut and introduced rather formally to a woman named Rosa. I sat with her there for the better part of half a day while Zav and the commander remained inside the hut. I saw him only once while he was talking, but that was for just a second. It was just a look. Still, it was enough for me to know that he was all right, and I was told frequently by Rosa and the guards that neither Zav nor I had anything to fear. That was rather small consolation in those circumstances, but it was better than nothing. Having reported on revolutionaries in other countries during my career as a correspondent, I knew that the assurance we were receiving was better than we had a right to expect under conditions like that.

"I had nothing better to do for most of the time but talk to Rosa, who kept offering me tea to assure me of her good intentions. For quite a while I ignored the tea and Rosa and just sat there, fretting. You can't quite imagine how it feels to be a prisoner until you're a prisoner yourself. That's a cliché of the first order, but it's unavoidable. There I was with a wall of a hut between my husband and myself, but the wall might as well have been a continent or an ocean. So I just sat there, and the longer I sat there the more I realized what was happening and that there was nothing I could do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about it. Finally, I accepted the damn tea. Rosa continued to sit beside me as if she were waiting for me to decide to talk to her. And finally I talked. I can't tell you what I started to say, but it must have been the right thing for both of us because we were soon talking rather easily with one another. Several guards stood out of earshot. They made no effort to eavesdrop or otherwise bother us. When they did have something to say to Rosa, they always spoke as if she had a certain rank or prestige.

"My husband and the man called Melchior were closeted for the better part of the afternoon, and I kept talking to Rosa for lack of anything better to do. At one point I asked her if she was married to the man with my husband. She smiled and nodded no, and her nod expressed renunciation rather than mere negation. Then she told me how she and Melchior had escaped from prison together and how they had been involved with the revolution ever since. When she continued to speak of the revolution, she became more animated. Her eyes took on a religious, almost a sexual zeal. Everything else became subordinate to that subject while she spoke—the surroundings, me, the guards, the island. I'd seen the same zeal in the eyes of other revolutionaries in South America, the Middle East and the north of Ireland. It has the binding force of love itself, and it neutralizes or subsumes everything else. It even imposes a kind of puritanism. I've talked to Zav about it many times. Male and female revolutionaries of this stripe can live in the closest physical proximity to one another, and there will be no improprieties whatever. It's as if any manifestations of personal feeling or simple human desire are luxuries or indulgences that the movement cannot tolerate.

"Rosa periodically spoke of the goals of the revolution—eliminating the regime (that was fundamental), gradually restoring full political and civil rights, ransoming the country from foreign (American) manipulation and so forth. If she were speaking of the second coming, she couldn't have spoken with more force and conviction. Then she admitted to me that life as a guerrilla did bring with it certain hardships. She had learned to become as tough and self-sufficient as a mountaineer. She told me that she could not allow herself to feel any sympathy for occasional prisoners that the group kidnapped. I asked if this included my husband and myself, and she answered quickly that we were not really prisoners. She said we were simply being detained. When I asked why, she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shrugged and nodded in the direction of the hut, as if the answer would have to come from there. At that point she asked me if I had any personal needs. I finally concluded that she was asking me if I had to use the toilet, and I nodded a relieved yes. Together we went to an outside latrine. Hanging on a line near the latrine were a number of washrag-sized cloths that had been carefully rinsed and squared on the line to dry. She noticed my looking at them and then explained with absolute frankness that they were her menstrual cloths. Whenever she needed them, she used them, then laundered the soiled ones and repeated the cycle. She shrugged as if to suggest to me that this was one of the prices of her way of life.

"We returned to the portico where we had been sitting. Suddenly, the door of the house was opened. Melchior appeared and summoned the guards, whispered something to them and then withdrew into the house again. The next thing I knew, I was being pulled into the hut where I saw Zav pinioned in a chair. He tried to free himself when he saw me, but it was no use. The guards pushed and pulled me toward a table, which was the only other piece of furniture in the room. I kept hearing screams, but it took several seconds before I realized that the screams were mine. When we reached the table, the guards stretched me full-length over the top of it. I kept screaming and struggling, but, with one of the guards holding my wrists and the other fastening my ankles, I could do nothing. I became aware that Zav was shouting at the other men in the room. Suddenly I felt the deepest fear I've ever known in my life. I didn't know what was going to happen to me, but I did know that I was helpless no matter what was in the offing. I felt myself becoming hysterical, and I tried to move. Then I began to sob. Just then I felt someone remove the scarf I was wearing. Then, holding me by the hair, he stuffed the scarf into my mouth. I continued to sob and scream through the dry wad of scarf until I started to retch. I felt as if I would throw up, but I couldn't stop sobbing. So I just kept on retching and sobbing against the dryness of that silk against the roof of my mouth. And all during this I could hear Melchior talk to Zav about me. He spoke as if I were just so much bait. The tears were cold on my cheeks. One of the guards seized me by the hair and yanked it. He kept holding my head back until I stopped struggling entirely. Then he turned my head to the right and held it there. I watched Melchior sidle toward me and touch the neck of my dress. I waited. His hand remained there, and he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

told Zav that it would be quite simple to pull the dress into shreds. I looked past Melchior and saw that Zav, still tied to the chair, had fallen to the floor. Melchior then removed his hand and resumed his conversation with Zav. He continued to talk until Zav became uncontrollable. He swore he would kill Melchior if he could free himself. I had never heard Zav speak that way—in just that way—before, but, of course, neither of us had ever been in a situation like that before. He sounded as if he were going out of his mind. He just kept swearing at Melchior and screaming that he would kill him, that he would kill him, that he would kill him even if it took him the rest of his life. Then the guard released my hair. Zav was trying to inch his way across the floor toward me, but he was getting nowhere. With his cheek against the packed dirt of the floor, he kept cursing Melchior and struggling to free himself. I saw Melchior walk toward Zav and talk to him in a different tone. I tried to hear what he was saying, but all I heard were whispers. Then I heard Melchior say, 'Remember how you feel right now.' When he moved away, I saw that Zav was upright in the chair again but still tied. He seemed suddenly different to me, as if he were older somehow. He was no longer struggling. He was silent. He seemed to slump in the chair. Melchior gestured to the guards who were holding me, and in a second I felt myself being released at the ankles and wrists. One guard pulled the scarf out of my mouth. For a minute I couldn't move. Then I saw that Zav was no longer tied although he was still seated. The guards and Melchior left the room, and Zav and I were by ourselves.

"By the time I reached Zav I was shaking and crying and really unable to speak. Everything had happened so quickly, and the violence of it had shaken me so that I wasn't in control of myself. Zav stood up and held me for a moment until I calmed. He kept telling me that it was all right, that the worst was over, really over, that there was nothing to be afraid of now. It's hard for me to remember how long we just clung to one another, but it must have been long enough for me to start thinking again. But for the longest time I couldn't speak. The words just wouldn't come out."

"Zav, what does he want?"
"I think he got it, Jan."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But what was it? Why did he do that to us?"

"It's hard to explain it now, Jan." He pauses and shakes his head as if he has a headache that will not go away. "To be frank about it, I think he wanted an admission from me. And he got it." Constantine stands away from her for a moment and begins flexing his wrists, which have been rubbed raw and bloody from the thongs. He takes a few steps and then returns limping to the chair.

"What's wrong, Zav?"

"Just stiff. It'll be all right."

"Will he. . ." Jan starts and stops. "Will they let us go now?"

"I don't doubt it for a second now. It's just a question of when."

"What did he want from you? What were you two talking about in here all afternoon?"

"Jan, you wouldn't believe me if I told you. It's so damn bizarre. I can't even believe it myself."

"Tell me anyway."

"We were talking. . ." he begins. "We were talking about justice."

"Justice?"

"Justice. He just wanted to know what I thought about justice, what I meant by justice. It was like a seminar." He begins to rub his wrists again. "You know, I can't believe it. I thought I had a pretty good conception of justice." He pauses. "Now I don't know. I really don't know." His face ages again, and he leans forward in the chair and puts his head in his hands. "I thought I was as sure of that as I've ever been of anything. And I stayed sure until they brought you in here and held you on that table. Then everything changed."

There is a quick knock on the door, and the door edges open to reveal Rosa. She is carrying a pail of water in which several towels are soaking. She looks at Jan and tries to manage a kind of smile. When she reaches Constantine in the chair, she rinses one of the towels over the pail and hands it tentatively to him. Jan intervenes, takes the rag and begins wiping Constantine's left cheek. He lets her touch the scrape on his cheek without flinching. His reaction pleases her since she knows that he rarely lets her do anything for him that he can do himself. Now he makes no attempt to stop her. Instead he closes his eyes and lets her wash the blood and dust from his cheek. When she sees him open his eyes again, she knows that he is not thinking of the cheek at all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Zav!"

"Yes."

"Look at me. Tell me what you're thinking, for God's sake. Don't just stare that way."

"Jan, I don't know what I'm thinking. I'm just sorting things out. How can I tell you what I'm thinking if I don't know it myself?" He pauses. "The main thing is that you're all right. That's the only thing that matters. He had me thinking that he would really do something to you. He really had me convinced."

"What made him do that? What made him bring everything to the edge like that?"?

"He wanted to prove something to me about justice," says Constantine, standing. "And he did."

Just then Melchior re-enters the room. He is accompanied by a guard.

"Rosa," he says, "get them something to drink. Something cold." He looks toward Constantine and his wife. "Do you like mint tea with ice? It's very good the way we make it. The mint is fresh here, and it makes excellent tea."

"Tea?" says Constantine and smirks. "Do you expect me to be at your mercy one minute and then to drink your tea the next?"

"Frankly, yes," answers Melchior immediately. "That little scene before was just an academic exercise, Mr. Constantine. You must realize that now. And I think you understand why. I hope you see a few things differently now." He turns to Constantine's wife. "Mrs. Constantine, your husband is an intelligent man. And he is a brave man. He was ready to risk his life for you. If he could have, he would have killed me. And that was precisely what I had to have him see for himself." He faces Constantine. "We really had reached an impasse, Mr. Constantine. Now we are not so different, are we? Now we are really the same." He offers Constantine a small cigar from his tunic. Constantine hesitates. Melchior offers it again, and Constantine takes it. Then Melchior lights the cigar for him.

"You may as well try to relax for a while. We'll arrange to have you back on the mainland as soon as it's dark. It's only a matter of a few hours." He looks at Jan. "I hope you are all right, Mrs. Constantine. There was no way I could have spared you what happened. I had to make sure that you believed I was in earnest."

"Why, for God's sake?"

"For the sake of a point. And for me it's not an unimportant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point." He looks at her to see if she understands. "Mrs. Constantine, you're a professional woman. You understand that everyone must have a reason for what he is doing. Your husband has a reason. You have a reason. My occupation is far different from yours, but I must have a reason as well. And it is a reason that I must respect and that others must respect. For the past five years I've been living by that reason, and I've succeeded in believing that it is the right reason for me. They call me a terrorist and a criminal and worse, much worse. But that means nothing to me because I can justify myself. I have a single purpose. I'm not hypocritical about it. There is a straight line between what I believe and what I do, what I say and what I think." He takes a second cigar from his tunic, lights it and shrouds himself for a moment in purple smoke. "In my conversation with your husband, I was anxious for him to understand that."

"But what difference could that make to you?" she answers.

"It made a difference, Mrs. Constantine. I can't explain why, but let me say that it was more than a matter of curiosity. After we talked for some minutes, I sensed for the first time in a long time that I was talking to a man whose views were very close to my own. Or should I say that these were my views at one time in my life. He reminded me of how I used to think. What came to bother me was that your husband could not or would not see that my views had passed beyond his own." He pauses. "He just couldn't see that only a thin line divided us. He refused to see that. Then I realized that he would never see it, that he had to be made to see it, made to see that we were just the same. Only our circumstances were different. That was all."

"You should have left my wife out of this," interposes Constantine.

"Perhaps I should have, but there was no other way to make the point."

"And now that it's made, then what?"

"Then, nothing. Why do there have to be consequences? I'm satisfied. Then again perhaps some of the remarks that you plan to make to your audience tomorrow night will be—how shall I say—a little different. Perhaps. Of course, that would mean more to you than to your audience. I'm sure they've been hand-picked to listen politely and then ignore everything you say—no matter what you say."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"In other words, you're telling me that my visit here is of no consequence."

"Precisely. I don't want to deceive you, my friend. Your lecture will be reported simply as a fact, and your picture will appear in the government newspaper, and it will all be done to make it seem that you are honoring the government by coming here."

"Window dressing?"

"Pardon me, but I don't understand . . ."

"Window dressing. It's a phrase we use at home to describe the non-essential."

"Very well, then. You are so much window dressing."

"In that case I can't understand why it was so damn important to you to make me see your 'reasons.' "

"It had nothing to do with that, Mr. Constantine. I was hoping that you would see that ideas are nothing unless you feel them, until they're in your blood. Life isn't an abstraction. To me that's another word for the unreal. When something is real, it's as real as air, as pain, as food. Do you understand me?"

Constantine finally gives a weary nod. "Still," he says, "Why did you put us through all this?"

Melchior smokes in silence for a moment. Then he begins to shake his head no. "I don't think I can explain it to you. Perhaps I just had to know that you could change. At one time I never thought I would change. Now look at me. I'm not the man I. . ."

Just then one of the guards runs into the hut. He is carrying a rifle at the ready.

"They're here," he shouts. "They've found us!"

"Who?" says Melchior, rushing to the guard.

"Valero's men. A group of them landed by boat. I saw them. They are on their way here."

"How many did you see?"

"I stayed as long as I could. No one saw me. As I came back, I saw a helicopter flying here from the south. By now it's already landed on the beach."

"Call the men," orders Melchior. "Tell them to come to the house immediately. Immediately. Tell them to bring all their arms, their shells, the grenades, everything."

The guard dashes from the hut. Rosa hurries through the door and runs to the room's one closet. She swings open the door and exposes a pantry-full of rifles and bandoleers.

"It seems that we'll have to change our plans," Melchior says to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Constantine. "I don't know how you were traced here, but that's not important now. The fact is that the enemy is here."

"What are you going to do?"

"What I must."

"And what's that?"

"We shall see."

Constantine and his wife exchange trapped glances as Melchior's men begin rushing into the hut and taking positions at the various windows as if they've rehearsed for this very eventuality. Rosa is carrying rifles, automatic weapons, bandoleers and grenades to each of the men at each of the windows. Just as she finishes, the last man enters the hut and slams and bolts the door behind him.

"The helicopter has landed on the beach," he says. "I counted twenty soldiers already there, and there were at least twenty in the helicopter. I stayed as long as possible."

"Did they see you?" asks Melchior.

"No."

Melchior nods, mutters something to him in dialect and motions him to the last unmanned parapet in the hut. There are now eight men in the room in addition to Melchior, Rosa, Constantine and his wife. Melchior makes the rounds at each of the windows and then returns to Constantine.

"We may have to fight them," he says. "Actually, this house is on the highest ground on the island. Because of that we have the advantage, regardless of numbers. If they begin firing, we can contain them as long as they do not bring reinforcements. By then we might be able to infiltrate and escape in the darkness. We have boats hidden at the far shore. Of course, if they've brought heavy weapons or mortars with them, we're doomed. If that's the case, my only hope is that they'll be reluctant to use them because . . ." He pauses. ". . . because they would not want to injure you or your wife."

"Does that make us hostages?" asks Constantine.

"We will see, Mr. Constantine. I hope it will not come to that." He squats on the floor and motions for Constantine and his wife to do the same. "Now there is nothing we can do but wait."

Constantine's wife leans against the wall just below window-sill level. She is shivering noticeably. She looks inquisitively at Constantine as if she expects to hear gunfire at any instant. But there is nothing to hear except the sound of breathing and the occasional sound of a rifle being loaded. One soldier to her right has lined up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eight grenades beside him. She is struck by the fact that they are in perfect alignment. She looks beyond the soldier and sees Rosa at the door of the pantry, waiting for the fight to start so that she can rush fresh supplies wherever they may be needed. To the left of Rosa she sees the gradually deepening sky through an open window. The first stars begin to show.

"Why can't you do something now?" asks Constantine.

"Impossible. There is a cliff behind the hut. It drops sheer to the sea. One hundred meters, at least, and even if we get down, there is nothing there. The only way out is back down the mountain—the way you came here, the way they are coming here."

"The boat!" shouts one of the soldiers.

"What boat?" snaps Melchior.

"Their boat," the soldier says, pointing to Constantine and his wife. "I tried to hide it on the beach, but it was too heavy to move. Someone must have seen it from the air."

"What difference does it make?" says another soldier. "The pig has come to the mountain now."

Melchior smiles to himself.

Suddenly the silence is broken by a man's voice amplified through a loudspeaker. The voice volleys through the hut.

"Mr. Constantine! Mr. Constantine! If you are in that house, answer me immediately."

Melchior stares at Constantine and puts his finger to his lips.

"Mr. Constantine! If you are in that house, answer now. I will wait ten minutes. In ten minutes I will assume that you are unable to answer. I will order my men to storm the house in ten minutes, do you understand?" There is a pause. "Are you alone?"

"He's just probing," whispers Melchior. "I don't think he knows anything definitely."

"What's your plan now?" asks Constantine.

"I don't know," says Melchior and begins biting his lower lip reflectively. "I don't know exactly how many are out there. I don't know if they have reinforcements coming. I don't know how many weapons they have or what type. In a fight we might be able to win or make them retreat, but it's doubtful."

"But he said we have only ten minutes," says Constantine's wife. "Nothing is going to change between now and then. And after that there'll be no choice."

After a pause Constantine says, "I have an idea."

"Yes," says Melchior suspiciously.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why couldn't you release us? I could explain that the price of our release is that they fly you and your men to Nitria. It's neutral there. I think I'm in a position to make a persuasive case for that if you trust me. They would be willing to do it out of deference."

"Deference?" says Melchior. "Mr. Constantine, just think over your proposal for a minute. What would stop them from destroying us once they knew you and your wife were safe in their hands?"

Constantine begins to answer but stops.

"Mr. Constantine, you continue to think that everyone thinks like you. I know these people. You can't deal with them until you defeat them, and then there would be no reason to deal with them at all."

"Release Jan then. Let her propose what I suggested, and I'll stay here to guarantee that they make good."

"No," says Jan.

"Why not?"

"Just no, that's all."

"Jan, we have only five minutes or so left, remember that. We have to do something between now and then. Besides, that way I know you'll be safe. They'll have to agree. They'll have no choice."

"It's a real possibility, Mr. Constantine," says Melchior. Keeping below windowsill level, he crawls to each of the eight men and then to Rosa. It is clear that he is polling them. When he returns, he says, "Very well. We agree. It is worth trying. If it does not work, we will have lost nothing." He turns to Constantine's wife. "Mrs. Constantine, you will not tell them how many we are here. You will simply tell them to land the helicopter in front of the hut and to leave the rotors turning. You will tell them to let us board it immediately. After we reach Nitria, I will permit the helicopter pilot and your husband to return in the helicopter to the mainland. It's a slim chance, but it may succeed."

"But will they listen to me?" asks Jan.

"There's no other alternative, Jan," urges Constantine.

"I can't do it, Zav."

"You have to. There's no other way, Jan. If it comes to a firefight, God knows who will survive."

Again the voice from the loudspeaker thunders through the hut, "You have only one minute, Mr. Constantine."

"Take this with you," says Melchior, handing Jan a piece of towel from one of the ammunition crates. "Wave it from the window just before you leave."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Slowly Jan gets to her feet and, standing to one side of the window, waves the towel.

"Maybe it's too dark," she says. "Maybe they can't see it now."

"Keep waving it," says Constantine.

The voice from the loudspeaker again invades the hut. "When you leave the hut, walk directly toward my voice. Do you understand? Walk straight toward my voice when you step out of the hut."

Flanked by Constantine and Melchior, Jan crawls toward the door. When Jan passes Rosa, Rosa touches her arm quickly and withdraws to her station. Once beside the door, Jan embraces Constantine while Melchior pulls the door open by no more than a foot. In an instant Jan steps outside and stands still for one second, two seconds, three seconds. She begins to shiver. She feels a wave of panic that makes her want to run—to run anywhere.

"Walk slowly toward my voice," come the instructions from the loudspeaker.

Jan takes a step toward the voice, then another, then a third. She proceeds like someone who is walking blindfolded. Even though it is not yet fully dark, she finds herself squinting at the ground just before her. Still shivering, she draws closer and closer to the voice until she is standing directly in front of a lean-cheeked man in a gray uniform. He motions to her with his hand to come forward. Then he raises his hand for her to stop.

"Where is Mr. Constantine?" he asks.

"He is still back there."

"Who are you? Are you his wife?"

"Yes."

"Why doesn't your husband come out?"

"He can't. There are other people in the house, and they have weapons."

"Who are they?"

"What difference does it make? They have guns, and they have my husband."

"Who are they? What do they want?"

As calmly as she can, Jan explains the arrangement about the flight to Nitria, the necessity of Constantine and the pilot being kept as hostages, Melchior's plan to permit them to return with the helicopter to the mainland. The man in the gray uniform listens intently.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And they expect me to comply with this?"

"My husband's life is at stake."

The man in the gray uniform looks away so that Jan sees him in profile. His Adam's apple protrudes above his collar. His chin and nose at times almost touch as he strokes his cheek with his fingers. "Very well, Mrs. Constantine. Very well."

"What does that mean?"

"We will do as they say." He faces away from her again. "Tell me, Mrs. Constantine, who are these people?" He waits for an answer, but there is none. "How many are there?" Again, no answer. "Is their leader a man about this tall with grayish-black hair and a rather definite nose?"

"Yes, and a mustache," answers Jan before she can stop herself.

"The mustache could have been added." He faces her in the darkness. "Mrs. Constantine, if this man is the one I think he is, he is someone who is a primary enemy of my country. More than your husband's life is involved here. This puts a new light on everything." He pauses. "Actually, we came to this island when one of our patrol planes spotted your boat on the beach. We had heard that you were overdue. But I had no idea that you were being held as captives here. This island has been uninhabited for years except for a few goats."

"But they're holding my husband in there. What are you going to do?"

"Did this man with your husband tell you his name? Was he called Melchior?"

"Yes."

The man in the gray uniform again strokes his cheek with his fingers. He stares toward the hut through the darkness. Then he speaks in his own language to someone in the darkness behind him. A soldier emerges from the night and stands beside the man in the gray uniform. They continue to speak for several minutes.

"What are you going to do?" asks Jan.

"We are going to save your husband, Mrs. Constantine. We will do exactly as they say, of course. The helicopter will be here in a few minutes, and we will fly your husband and the others to Nitria." He picks up the loudspeaker and gestures to Jan to sit down. He speaks in the direction of the hut. After he finishes, he sits down beside Jan.

"I have told them that we will do as they say." He removes a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cigarette from inside his cap and lights it. "Permit me to introduce myself. I am Colonel Valero."

Jan listens to the voice. It has no pitch. If anything, it is like an extended whisper. Colonel Valero proceeds to question her about the occupants of the house. When she remains silent, he starts to speak reassuringly about the helicopter's short flight to Nitria and then how she and her husband will be together again on the mainland. Even as he talks, she hears the rotors of the helicopter and almost immediately sees it in silhouette over the trees behind her. In seconds it is directly over her, forcing her to cower beneath the perpendicular hurricane of the propwash. It proceeds toward the hut, hovers there like a huge gull waiting to roost and carefully lands in the clearing in front of the hut. The rotors keep turning, and the red and green landing lights of the helicopter glimmer like fixed, definite planets in the dark. While Jan watches, the moon comes out in full force, silvering everything. She turns to the colonel. The sound of the helicopter makes talking impossible. Shivering, she faces the hut and waits.

Finally, the door of the hut is opened, and Rosa and one of Melchior's men dash toward the helicopter and climb aboard. They are followed immediately by another man, then a third, a fourth and a fifth until there are eight men and Rosa in the helicopter. Jan waits for Zav and Melchior to emerge from the hut and make for the helicopter. The colonel looks at her and makes a gesture. Jan tries to understand what he means.

"Are there more?" he shouts.

She is about to answer when another soldier approaches the colonel, makes a chopping movement with his hand that the colonel seems to understand and withdraws. The colonel smiles at Jan and asks her to sit back.

"What are you going to do?" Jan screams.

The colonel shrugs as if he is unable to hear her. Meanwhile Jan tugs at the colonel's sleeve. He pushes her away from him so that she falls. Facing the helicopter again, he removes a pistol from his holster, aims it carefully and fires one, two, three, four, five, six shots at regular intervals into the fuselage. By the time he has fired the sixth shot, the whole area around the hut becomes a carnival of gunfire. Jan jumps to her feet in time to see the flash of bullets rip into the skin of the helicopter. Then there is the sound of automatic fire, then the wang of ricochets, then the crunching thump of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grenade. Above everything, Jan can hear screams and shouts from the helicopter, but there is no counterfire. The helicopter's rotors turn slower and slower like a clock that is inexorably running down. Another grenade explodes, and the helicopter tilts heavily to one side as its left landing gear collapses.

"What are you doing?" Jan screams. "You're killing them! Your're killing everybody!"

The colonel faces her, aims the pistol at her face and orders her to stay down.

"But you promised me," shouts Jan.

"You will stay where you are, Mrs. Constantine," mutters the colonel and flicks his pistol at her.

She does not move. Just then the gunfire stops. She hurries to stand up, but the colonel pushes her down. She is shivering. The colonel kneels down beside her and orders her to crouch lower. She can feel rocks and pebbles as sharp as broken ice against her kneecaps. Motionless, she listens to the voices of the soldiers in the silvered darkness. She listens as soldiers dash for new positions. Their bandoleers jangle heavily as they run. Once she hears the slap of a holster against a hip, and she knows that there must by an officer out there. For a moment there is no sound at all. The silence goes on, on, on. . .

When the next explosion happens, it comes with such force and surprise that Jan screams. After a moment she scrambles to her feet and looks toward the hut. The helicopter has practically disappeared. What remains is burning. The flames are house-high. She has to turn her face away from the heat. She cries and screams at the same time. Having counted and seen eight men and Rosa climb into the helicopter, she knows that Constantine and Melchior are still in the hut, but she is suddenly not sure any more.

Within minutes the fire begins to diminish. What is left of the helicopter resembles the burnt timbers of a shack after a prairie fire. The remaining flames throw serpentining shadows against the face of the hut.

"You killed all of them!" she screams at Valero. "You killed your own pilot. You sacrificed your own pilot."

"That could not be helped, Mrs. Constantine. Now you will kindly remain here while I. . ." He pauses and strokes his cheek with his fingers. "Believe me when I tell you that I am sorry about your husband. It could not be helped."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As Valero continues to talk, Jan realizes that he is under the impression that Zav was one of the people on the helicopter and that Valero is apologizing for letting him be killed. For a moment she is stunned.

"But he's still in the house!" she says. "He and Melchior never came out!"

With that, the colonel's expression changes completely. He holsters his pistol and seizes Jan by the arm.

"Do you mean. . ." he begins.

"Zav!" she says and then repeats the name as she sees Constantine open the door of the hut and walk slowly through moonlight and firelight toward her. Valero turns and sees him at the same time. Unholstering his pistol, he waits as Constantine skirts the still burning helicopter. When he finally reaches the spot where Valero and Jan are standing, Constantine stops and stares at both of them. His eyes pass from Valero to his wife and stay there.

"Zav," she says, "Zav, my God, what's happening? What's happening?"

Constantine just looks at her and then shakes his head slowly, as if in disbelief.

"Mr. Constantine," says the colonel. "I am Colonel Valero. I must ask you. . . ."

"Zav!" shouts Jan and puts her hand to her mouth. "Zav, look!"

They all turn just as Melchior emerges from the hut and stands in the glow of the helicopter's embers. He is unarmed. He takes several steps into the clearing until he is in clear silhouette against the remains of the helicopter. Then he just stands there akimbo.

Valero is staring at Melchior, as if he is unable to believe what he is seeing.

"Christ," mutters Constantine. "What's he trying to prove?" What's he doing?"

The colonel turns to his left and barks an order. In seconds, six soldiers rise from their positions and converge in a tightening semicircle around Melchior. They move slowly, stealthily, like hunters around some cornered but still dangerous animal. Melchior watches them but does not move. His hands are still on his hips.

"Zav," says Jan, "what are they going to do?"

"I don't know," says Constantine. "But why's he doing that? Why?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Constantine notices that the soldiers are within a few yards of Melchior now, who has still not budged. The firelight dances on the soldiers' bayonets. Suddenly one of the soldiers steps forward and jabs with his bayonet at Melchior's chest. Melchior steps back. The soldier parries again. Without moving Melchior begins talking to the soldiers. The soldiers draw back a little. He continues to talk, and one of the soldiers drops his rifle.

"What are they waiting for?" screams Valero.

The soldiers keep drawing back while Melchior, standing within inches of the embers, continues to speak to them.

Valero barks another order to the retreating soldiers. They stop withdrawing but do not advance. Valero steps out of the darkness and marches to the stymied semi-circle of soldiers. He walks to the soldier who has dropped his rifle, aims his pistol at his eyes and fires. Then he turns to Melchior, who is already saying something to him. For a moment Valero stops. Melchior makes a move toward him, and Valero fires four times at Melchior's chest from a range of several yards. Melchior staggers to a stop, tries to stay on his feet and then topples on his back into the burning and smoldering debris of the helicopter. As soon as he falls, the soldiers converge on him. They jab through his body with their bayonets.

"O my God, my God," sobs Jan. "Zav, I can't stand it! I can't take it any more!"

Constantine is swearing softly to himself. His lips purse in a straight, small line. He watches the soldiers at their work. Then he sees Valero turn and walk back toward him. When Valero is beside him again, Constantine looks at him closely. Valero ignores the look.

"You killed that man in cold blood," says Constantine.

"It was an execution, Mr. Constantine."

Valero stares at Constantine disdainfully. In a moment they are surrounded by soldiers, who are strangely quiet. Constantine sees in their faces a curious blend of exhilaration and fear. Valero turns to one of his lieutenants, mutters an order and dispatches him with a push in the direction of the helicopter. Constantine, puzzled, watches the lieutenant walk directly to Melchior's body. The clothes on the body have caught fire in places, and the lieutenant drags the charred, stabbed corpse by its boots from the embers. When he has the body clear, he stands erect beside it. The lieuten-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ant looks in the direction of Valero, and Valero nods. Quickly the lieutenant removes a machete from his belt, raises it, aims and with one quick stroke severs the head of Melchior from the trunk.

"Stop!" shouts Constantine. "Stop this! In the name of God stop this!"

The lieutenant is already rolling Melchior's body back into the embers.

"I regret that this offends your sensibilities, Mr. Constantine. It's a simple matter of needing evidence to identify this traitor. The head should be sufficient, don't you think?"

Constantine sees the lieutenant lift the cut head by the hair and carry it toward them, letting it swing by his side as if he were bearing a pail of water. Suddenly Constantine dashes toward him.

"Zav!" shouts Jan.

"Mr. Constantine," orders Valero. "Stop where you are! Stop where you are!"

But Constantine is already only a few feet from the lieutenant, who drops Melchior's head in surprise and just stands there. Before he can react, Constantine seizes the head by the hair and runs toward and then quickly around the hut. The lieutenant is already in pursuit. Valero and the other soldiers follow the lieutenant. Jan runs in the midst of them.

By the time she reaches the opposite side of the hut, Jan sees Zav on the lip of a cliff. He is holding Melchior's head at arm's length over the edge. In the moonlight the soldiers, led by the lieutenant and Valero, are closing on him.

"Zav!" she says, then to herself, "Zav, O my God. . ."

The soldiers are closer now. Valero and the lieutenant are within five or six yards. Valero is saying something to Constantine, who listens, then suddenly turns his back on him, swings the head of Melchior once and casts it far out into the surging water at the foot of the cliff. Then Constantine faces the soldiers who, except for the colonel, are no longer standing but retreating. Some have even dropped their rifles and, by the time they pass Jan, are in full flight.

Phoenix, I remember one
who perished on a cross—
extinguished.
He burned in pools of burgundy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like fire within fire—
extinguished.
Yet from the dark of the ashes
he glows.

His wings are numbered
with the flowers of our land,
with all the days of all the years,
with pebbles and the merest stones.

Like you, my phoenix,
he survived our hunger,
and his mercy feeds us.

Dying with his wings outspread,
he gathered all who buried
him in ashes
and became, like you,
the spring and fire of our agony.

Go now, my sweet bird,
show me the road I'll follow.

Last Rites

"What they have to deal with now is a legend. And in this superstitious country, that's one hell of an enemy."

DeNubia is talking to Constantine and his wife in the rear seat of the embassy limousine. Constantine's wife is sitting between the two men so that DeNubia has to lean slightly forward in order to see Constantine clearly while he speaks to him. He pauses and sits weightily back in the seat.

Constantine notices that there are no other vehicles on the road. Frowning, he remembers that this is the same road that he and his wife used to enter the city several days earlier. But where there was noise, fireworks, dancing, singing and banners-and-bunting on the telephone poles, there is now nothing. Some trappings from the carnival are still scattered against the buildings, and there is litter

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

everywhere, but these remnants, like white confetti blown across an empty beach, only emphasize the silence. From one of the side-streets, a black-haired boy, naked except for a shredding, sleeveless undershirt over his sparrow's body, looks up at the passing limousine while he simultaneously urinates on a curbed crunch of newspaper pages. He waves. Constantine does not return the wave. He looks beyond the boy at the wider avenues, but there is not a human being visible anywhere. The windows of almost all of the shops and apartments are shuttered.

"Look," says DeNubia, leaning forward again, "it's like a damn ghost town. And it's been like this since last night. That's about twenty-three hours now since Valero announced that Melchior. . . that Public Anarchist Number One was dead. The streets haven't seen a pedestrian since. Everybody just went up in smoke. Of course, some of this is because of that business with the head. Valero's soldiers spread that around, and the news went from doorway to doorway like fire." He sits back again and shrugs. "For the love of Christ, what made you do a thing like that? Do you know what this means? It means that you destroyed the evidence. It means that they can't prove that Melchior is really dead. And on top of that, when you threw that head into the sea, it kicked up an old superstition here about one of the old gods. And that's enough to fill these people with the true religion." He shrugs again. "You gave all of us one hell of a headache here. The government can announce that Melchior's dead, but they can't prove it. And as long as they can't prove it, he's not dead at all. In international politics that's called an unstable condition. And we just can't function in an unstable condition." He waits. "Of course, that's entirely apart from the local superstitions here. Melchior was a kind of saviour to these people. Even if the government can somehow prove that he's dead, the proof just feeds the legend. Dead or alive, Melchior's always alive to the people. As long as they believe that old bullshit about the shepherd-god and the wild pig, Melchior's alive. But you really complicated the whole picture on all counts. What I want to know is why in the hell you did what you did?"

Constantine says nothing. He simply sits with his hands crossed and looks directly ahead. His wife regards him apprehensively, fidgets with her purse but says nothing.

"Can't you give me one reason why you did that? What in the hell am I supposed to say to. . .?" asks DeNubia.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Constantine turns to DeNubia as if he has not been aware of his presence until now. "Shut up."

"What do you mean?"

"Just shut up."

The limousine passes neighborhood after shuttered neighborhood. It seems as if the whole country has suddenly gone into mourning. DeNubia keeps smoking one cigarette after another. As soon as the limousine curves toward the airport, DeNubia edges forward in his seat. He takes what's left of a cigarette from his lips and flicks it out of the open window. He looks toward the runway.

"Christ," he mutters. "They're here."

"Who?" asks Jan.

"The establishment. The whole damn establishment. Even the old man is here this time. God damn it, I didn't have any advance word on this." The limousine comes to a halt near the runway. "You two better wait here for a minute," says DeNubia and opens the door. He steps nervously out backwards and begins to walk and then trot toward the official-looking group gathered near the stairwell beside a lone American jet on the tarmac.

"Zav," says Jan.

"Yes."

"What's the matter? Can you talk about it yet?"

"Don't ask me, Jan. Don't ask me now, anyway."

"But you haven't said two words to me since they brought us back from that God-forsaken island. I can't. . ."

"Do you know what he said to me?"

"Who?"

"Melchior."

"How could I know?"

"When we were in that hut by ourselves after the helicopter blew up, we talked. He told me that he could keep me as a final hostage, but it would prove nothing. He knew they would kill us both to get him. So, he just told me to leave. He said that it wasn't worth it for both of us to end in that place."

"Is that all?"

"No, not all," says Constantine. He pauses and, when he speaks again, he tries to keep his voice from shaking. "He called me by my first name, Jan. He said, 'Xavier, we could have been good friends. We could have been like brothers, Xavier.' Then, as I was about to open the door, he told me that our talk about justice was not over.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He said he was going to act out the last part of it.. He told me to watch. Then. . ." He chokes on the word. "You won't believe this, Jan."

"Tell me, please."

"Then he came over to me and embraced me. He told me that this was the way soldiers parted for the last time. There were tears in his eyes, Jan."

Jan says nothing while Constantine looks at the group near the plane. DeNubia is talking to one in the group, then he detaches himself and hurries back to the limousine.

"When I saw the lieutenant raise that machete and do what he did with it, I knew I had to do something. I just couldn't let them desecrate him that way. Something flashed in my mind from a story he told me earlier that day. There's no time to tell it now, but he said that it touched the people in this country very deeply. So I thought about that when I did what I did. I thought I might be able to salvage something for him from his own people."

"Is that why you think the soldiers ran away?"

"I don't know. I hope so. DeNubia says the story's all over the country by now. I guess the soldiers spread it themselves when they got back here. I hope that the people behind all those shutters in the city see the connection." He pauses. "Somehow it still doesn't seem enough."

"Zav, I can't understand this. I can't understand the whole business."

"It's still not enough, Jan."

DeNubia opens the door of the limousine and beckons them to follow him. Once the three of them are walking, DeNubia says, "It's just a formality. They wanted to see you off. Even though you never did give the lecture, they still think you did them a service. In fact, they think you did them a big favor."

"A favor?" asks Jan and stops.

"It seems your husband helped them get rid of a nuisance. Let's put it that way."

As they approach the group, the Chief of State himself and an aide separate themselves from the rest and approach Constantine. The others form a single rank beside the stairwell of the jet.

Constantine watches the Chief of State approach him, noting that the man's face and the face of the white-mustached leader in the hotel lobby photograph are not really the same. It is clearly the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same man, but the touchups in the photograph have masked the real face. The Chief's jaw is heavier, the eyes more closely set, the head more erect but definitely thicker.

"Mr. Constantine," says the Chief of State. "We can dispense with formalities. I want you to know that we deplore this incident. We regret that you have decided to cancel your speech and return, but we certainly understand."

Constantine says nothing. DeNubia coughs once behind him.

"As it is," continues the Chief of State, "you have helped us immeasurably in eliminating a great enemy of both of our countries."

Constantine notices that Colonel Valero is one of the officers in the retinue near the stairwell. He focuses on him until Valero returns his stare. The face is expressionless.

"This criminal who called himself Melchior was simply a desperado," says the Chief of State. "He would stop at nothing. Our forces had been pursuing him for years. Now that whole episode is over. And for that we are grateful to you."

DeNubia coughs again.

"Of course, we've had a little difficulty with the population here since yesterday, but that's to be expected. My people tend to be superstitious. Many of the people thought of this Melchior as something more than what he really was, but we can handle that."

Constantine is still silent.

"Is there anything you would like to say to me before you leave, Mr. Constantine?" asks the Chief of State.

"Yes," says Constantine. "There's been a misunderstanding."

"A misunderstanding? How? Tell me."

"Melchior isn't dead. He escaped just before I left the house. The man your soldiers killed was his second in command. Your soldiers shot the wrong man."

"Escaped?" says the Chief of State. "He escaped? What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. Melchior escaped down the cliff behind the hut."

"Colonel Valero!" shouts the Chief of State, breathing heavily.

Valero takes one step forward, right-faces and marches erectly toward the Chief of State where he comes to a brisk halt and remains at attention.

"Yes, Your Excellency," says Valero, saluting.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mr. Constantine has just told me that Melchior escaped, that you killed someone else. Is this true?"

"Impossible, Your Excellency," responds Valero, obviously taken aback. "I myself shot him four times at pointblank range."

"You shot someone else," says Constantine.

"I know what Melchior looked like, Mr. Constantine. There is not the slightest doubt that the man I executed was Melchior," retorts Valero. "No doubt at all."

"In that case, one of us is not telling the truth," says Constantine.

Valero faces the Chief of State. He is beginning to look worried. He raises his fingers as if to stroke his cheek and then comes immediately to attention again. "Your Excellency, I swear on my oath as a soldier that this man is lying."

"Why should he lie?" demands the Chief of State. "Melchior kept him a prisoner for an entire day. Why should he say that Melchior's still alive if he's not alive? What does he have to gain from that, Valero?"

"Your Excellency, I shot Melchior myself, and I was prepared to bring back certain evidence to this effect when. . ."

"Are you sure you executed the right man?" shouts the Chief of State. By now all the other officers near the stairwell are looking at the Chief of State and listening.

"I am positive, your Excellency."

"It seems to be your word against mine, Colonel," says Constantine.

"I'm telling you the absolute truth, Your Excellency," repeats Valero.

"Prove it," says Constantine. He looks at the Chief of State. "Get him to prove it." He faces Valero. "As long as you can't prove it, the matter's not closed is it? I leave you with that problem, Colonel."

There is silence. Valero left-faces and returns to his place in the rank of officers by the stairwell. Constantine follows him with his eyes and notices that a muscle is flickering noticeably in his cheek. He turns to Jan, and together they walk up the stairwell into the plane, which is otherwise empty except for them. Constantine looks back once. The Chief of State is talking heatedly with his aide. The retinue of officers disbands, leaving Valero by himself for a moment. DeNubia, coughing and reaching for another cigarette, is already trotting back to the limousine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

More Poetry Matters

Clouding up again. Certain days there is a feeling
that whatever we arrange
Will sooner or later get all fucked up.

THESE ARE THE OPENING lines of a recent poem titled "The Fairies' Song" by the winner of this year's National Book Award, Pulitzer Prize, and National Book Critic's Circle Award. It occurs in a book of "bits," mostly prose, often consisting of lists of names—other poets, clothing materials, eating places—which make up a volume with illustrations by Joe Brainard.[1] Vive la bagatelle, but you would never guess from reading this entertaining, campy book ("America is a fun country") that John Ashbery, we've been told, is the true inheritor of Wallace Stevens' mantle and that this new collection for Viking is major poetry.[2] How does it happen that the writer of these lines about things getting fucked up, the wag who makes lists of New York poetry pals including himself, who insists that "I want a pair of orange pants and a pair of orange and white shoes to go with them" or sees that "Up there of course the subdued glow is where McDonald's, Carrol's, Arthur Treacher, Colonel Sanders and Dunkin' Donuts succeed each other at the pace of a stately gavotte," can also give us depth and complex emotion in poems that help us live our lives, as Stevens said they should?

My un-Pulitzerian answer is they don't, but the reviewers and judges, daunted by the poems' difficulties, have supposed instead that they are profundities. For Ashbery is a masterful tease, and it would of course be a dull fellow who merely whined that the emperor was without clothes. So let me quote some brief bits from typical poems in the most recent collection:

Lately
I've been looking at old-fashioned plaids, fingering
Starched white collars, wondering whether there's a way
To get them really white again. My wife
Thinks I'm in Oslo—Oslo, France, that is.

(From "Worsening Situation")

[1] THE VERMONT NOTEBOOKS, by *John Ashbery* and *Joe Brainard*. Black Sparrow Press. $15.00; $3.50 paper.
[2] SELF-PORTRAIT IN A CONVEX MIRROR, by *John Ashbery*. Viking. $5.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Some lines from the beginning of "Grand Galop":

> All things seem mention of themselves
> And the names which stem from them branch out to other
> referents. . . .
> And today is Monday. Today's lunch is: Spanish omelet, lettuce
> and tomato salad,
> Jello, milk and cookies. Tomorrow's: sloppy joe on bun,
> Scalloped corn, stewed tomatoes, rice pudding and milk.

and from later on:

> I cannot decide in which direction to walk
> But this doesn't matter to me, and I might as well
> Decide to climb a mountain (it looks almost flat)
> As decide to go home
> Or to a bar or restaurant or to the home
> Of some friend as charming and ineffectual as I am
> Because these pauses are supposed to be life

Finally, from "Ode to Bill":

> . . . What is writing?
> Well, in my case, it's getting down on paper
> Not thoughts, exactly, but ideas, maybe:
> Ideas about thoughts. Thoughts is too grand a word.
> Ideas is better, though not precisely what I mean.
> Someday I'll explain. Not today though.

Aw, go on with you! The day Ashbery decides to explain I may not be around. Such a charming, beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating his wings against the void, could go either this way or that, call it *x* or call it *y*, order sloppy joe or spanish omelet while fingering his starched white collars in Oslo, France. It's all one for that: any of the lines could come from any of the poems; you can't possibly quote anything "out of context" since there is never a context; and any particular poem could go on much longer than it does. Or go on not so long. The volume's title-poem may seem an exception to these rules but I don't think so; its elegantly mannered weariness, all beauty and wistful civilization, is the perfection of elaborate trifling. Consummate verbal teasing—it's, as we say, *all words*, but quite monotonous and certainly not as funny as Kenneth Koch, just to stay within the New York School. Ashbery is too much the kind of writer who makes Gerald Ford or Scoop Jackson feel good about not reading poetry. Of course we shouldn't blame him for that, but perhaps we needn't exalt him either.

One of the poems in John Bricuth's first book[3] is titled "The Middle West" and goes like this:

[3] THE HEISENBERG VARIATIONS, by *John Bricuth*. University of Georgia Press. $7.50; $3.95 paper.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the wrath of God rode down our street
Casting to four winds bricks and plaster,
We had just, I recall, sat down to eat
With the brand new Baptist pastor,
Talking sin
As the roof fell in
An unexpected disaster.

Later, singing beneath the debris
Out in the topsy-turvy street,
We dragged ("Nearer My God to Thee")
Grandma Pickle by her sneakered feet
In a prone position
In a dazed condition
Clutching two Bibles and a parakeet.

This touching human drama, faithfully rendered, might lead you to suspect that Bricuth is a poet of some fun, and you might then be surprised to read a foreword to his book by Harold Bloom which tells us that Bricuth is comparable to Ammons and Ashbery, is "battling for strength against a formidable triple composite precursor of Yeats, Stevens and Hart Crane," a "strong poet," indeed a "central poet in the American romantic tradition" who must, if he is to develop correctly (according to Bloomish principles) became more "antithetical." It's true that Crane and Yeats are hanging round in some of the poems, but I take a good deal less seriously than Bloom does Bricuth's inevitable struggle with them, and myself liked best two longer poems where he avoids them entirely. In "Laurel and Hardy" and particularly in a splendid one called "Glenn Miller," Bricuth achieves sharp, funny and compassionate understanding—in the ways of a good novelist or essayist might—of engaging figures from our collective past. The book is restless, inquiring, and invariably entertaining in its detail, as in this single patch from the Miller poem:

now the hits are coming one by one
Adios *String of Pearls* *At Last* *In the Mood*
"One of the best of a swell crop of new tunes is
This Time the Dream's on Me here's Ray to sing it for you"

last chorus the derby mutes
the trombones swinging left right the trumpets
upanddown the saxes (diagonally)
back and forth the band
rocking slowly in the light
the crowd poised in darkness
like an animal holding its breath
he has always had this deep fear like a dream it *is* a dream
if he lets the music stop if he loses control of time
time will eat him up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is but one of Bricuth's styles. Along with Robert Pinsky's *Sadness and Happiness, The Heisenberg Variations* figures as the year's best first book of poems.

Less ambitiously, more quietly, Michael Van Walleghen has produced some attractive, moody evocations of the way we live some of the time, when, as it were, we live in "Wichita":[4] "When Mr. Nixon/comes to dinner/it's Wichita, someplace/lonely, some anxious kitchen/where it hums/like dwindled flies/warming on a window sill" ("Where She Lives"). The poems are all about the same length, short unrhymed lines, recalling at moments W. C. Williams at others Eli Siegel's "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana." Their musical virtues are real; the flow and pace of lines need to be heard. There isn't much variety of tone, very few fireworks, but you know you're listening to somebody with an individual way of taking things. Here is the beginning of "The Confession," last poem in the book:

> He reads anything,
> pretends to work, think,
> or falls asleep till noon,
> still waiting for the mail. . .
> which never comes to Wichita
> in mid-July, where it stinks
> of last night's supper
> or something even worse,
> something cats might leave
> behind the stove. Anyway,
> certainly today, he thinks,
> he'd just get up, get dressed
> and write her one last letter
> explaining everything. This time
> he'd be better, he'd confess
> how everything was all his fault:
> the wind for instance, the heat,
> the water tank that hovered
> like a luminous evil cloud
> above the front lawn trees

Clearly Van Walleghen is not just going to "confess." The poems are mainly atmosphere and leave a good taste in the head; I'm not sure how much further their author can or wants to go along these lines, but he should be pleased with this book.

Marilyn Hacker writes too much, doesn't blot many lines (or at least many poems) and adopts at times, perhaps unconsciously, a hopped-up early Lowell manner ("What do you know of me? I am alone./The turning sockets on the rack of bone/rotate like the cogged hubs of jointed wheels.") and a tough-sexy lyricism which isn't irresistible ("I kissed his eyes, mouth, feet. I kissed his knees,/Ate honey from the flower between

[4] THE WICHITA POEMS, by *Michael Van Walleghen*. University of Illinois Press. $6.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his thighs/and felt it rise with sap against my tongue. He was so young. . .").[5] But more often than not she cares about the figures her poems make, and writes urgently, sometimes delicately, about separation, a state peculiarly interesting for the poet who not only—as woman or as man—is separated from somebody else, but must also write about being separated from somebody else. The poem where this situation is treated most complicatedly and movingly is "Somewhere in a Turret," too long to quote in full but which begins like this:

> Somewhere in a turret in time,
> castled and catacombed in but
> still on a tan street that
> ends with a blue-and-white gingerbread house,
> those rooms are still filled
> with our pictures and books. On the sill
> our black-and-white cat hums after a fly.
> It is getting light. When we come in,
> no one will ask you to leave, no one will send me away.

It proceeds through five stanzas, musing about present and past and what you can do to experience by imagining scenarios for it ("La Figlia che Piange" comes to mind), then ends with the following wry compromise:

> But you know about words. You have had time
> to figure out that hardly anyone
> came back to bed because of a poem.
> Poems praise and protect us from
> our lovers. While I write this
> I am not having heartburn
> about your indifference. We could walk
> into any room,
> You wouldn't ask me to leave. I wouldn't send you away.

There are enough good moments in these poems, enough feel of and for cities, rooms, textures, to convince me that Marilyn Hacker is somebody to be reckoned with who will give us more and better.

I've admired Seamus Heaney's work, but have preserved my distance from it: almost no human beings, but grainily humble perceptions in terse lines.[6] There are some further capable poems in this mode in the new (and, at least in England) well-selling volume; yet I confess to being more interested in the group of poems from the book's Part II. There, because he has been pressed to, Heaney writes about being a poet in Ulster in time of The Troubles. "What ever you Say Say Nothing," one of these poems has it; Heaney's way is the way of an Irish poet writing sixty years after Yeats's "Easter, 1916" or "Meditations in Time of Civil War." He carries it off with both dignity and gallows humor; in fact I hadn't fully realized

[5] SEPARATIONS, by *Marilyn Hacker*. Knopf. $3.95.
[6] NORTH, by *Seamus Heaney*. Oxford University Press. $5.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

until these poems showed me, how sly and expert is the presence of their poet. Though it is the merest coincidence that Heaney grew up on a farm in Derry while Robert Frost spent his young manhood on a farm in Derry, New Hampshire, perhaps Heaney would accept the comparison. At any rate I found the relative talkinesss of these concluding poems, their reach towards some kind of social sophistication and manner—even put to the purposes of more elaborately saying "nothing"—an attractive new direction I hope Heaney will keep on taking. Here are a few lines from the last poem, "Exposure," where the poet, living in Wicklow in December, broods about what he means by *not* living in Ulster:

> Rain comes down through the alders,
> Its low conducive voices
> Mutter about let-downs and erosions
> And yet each drop recalls
>
> The diamond absolutes.
> I am neither internee nor informer;
> An inner émigré, grown long-haired
> And thoughtful; a wood-kerne
>
> Escaped from the massacre,
> Taking protective colouring
> From bole and bark, feeling
> Every wind that blows; . . .

Yeats's "roof-levelling" wind is still at it, and Heaney's poem is elaborately aware of its own necessity of coming to terms with windy Yeats. These are poems which deepen and begin to reveal themselves only on rereading.

"The expense of spirit on a waste of shame/Is sold forever to the single stag/Who takes it home in a brown paper bag," three lines at the end of the title poem from Karl Shapiro's new collection, sum up what is pleasing about many of his poems: their irritation with and affection for "ordinary life."[7] Sarcastic and literary, they seem funnier and sharper than Shapiro's past fulminations, more at ease with how things proceed in their courses. Howard Nemerov is the other poet who can do up these subjects: girls working in banks, flying first-class, the look of a university "Humanities Building." Bits from some poems detach themselves and become the kind of thing one might take to heart and when alone repeat: "In Hell/ Said Randall Jarrell/Americans tell each other/How to make a martini." Actually Shapiro is not as nice and ingratiating as Nemerov; his lines often feel flatter and less musical. But this is the sort of thing you have to like to like Shapiro:

> The garage fool starts his engines on Sunday morning
> About nine or ten, when sluggards are sleeping
> And pious people in pews,

[7] ADULT BOOKSTORE, by *Karl Shapiro*. Random House. $6.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beginning with his mechanical edger,
Edging his lawn to a Euclidean line,
Then yanks his power-mower to a roar,
And roars his grass and vacuums it as well.
Next comes the buzz-saw with its silvery teeth
Screaming and lopping his lumber,
And after hammering for half an hour,
Pot-shotting the sabbatical ears of rest,
Graduates to the pruning, which requires the chain-saw,
Indian war-whoops, banshee shrieks,
Groaning of greenwood, and at last silence,
A blessed gathering of boughs,
A going into the house
Where one imagines the toy pop of a beer can
And the insect clicking of a TV dial.

I like "The Garage Fool" and wish well the persistent and fully-alive voice of its creator.

Richard Howard is unlike any other contemporary poet I know in that while he writes a critical prose (usually about other poets) of needless opacity and boundless pretentions, he has developed into a poet who though without any particular accent that characterizes The Howard Style, is nonetheless almost always lucid and interesting to read.[8] Interesting, that is, if you like gossip, literary anecdote, jokes (usually nice, not malicious) and the more or less continuous hovering of Howard's elders and betters, the great dead and some of the quick on whom he depends for the substance of his poems. Depends on them to the extent that they must make personal appearances; for example, in a poem written at the time of Auden's death, I note within two pages Cocteau, Stravinsky, Piaf, MacNeice, Roethke, Magnani, Neruda, Rod McKuen, plus Donnas Anna and Elvira, Santa Maria sopra Minerva and a couple of Harvard freshmen just thrown in. What distinguishes this volume from Howard's earlier impersonations of nineteenth-century artistic and literary figures doing their acts (in *Untitled Subjects* and *Two-Part Inventions*) is that, in the title of one of the new poems, "Howard's Way" is now in the picture. Poems to Proust, Auden, Hart Crane—it's clear what some of the fellow feelings are which move Howard to utterance. But even confessing to the love that dare not speak its name is done with verve and the resolve not to be a bore about it. Speaking to Crane, and with Whitman in mind, the poet says ". . .Take my hand/as you gave yours to him. We suffer from/the same fabled disease, and only the hope/of dying of it keeps a man alive. Keeps!" And in a slightly different tone, Howard's musing about whether Auden failed, as one obituary said about him, to make his way inside "a world of emotion," leads to this:

But my *personal* knowledge is odd, my evidence suspect even:
on a club-car up to Cambridge, two freshmen scribbled a
note—

[8] FELLOW FEELINGS, by *Richard Howard*. Atheneum. $4.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Are you Carl Sandburg?" "You've ruined," you wrote back,
"mother's day."
Was that emotion? Was this—the time backstage at the Y
when impatient to read to the rustling thousands out front,
you asked
(possessing no small talk—and with you I possessed no
large)
why it was I no longer endured a difficult mutual friend.
"Because he calls everyone *else* either a kike or a cocksucker,
and since, Wystan, both he and I are. . . well, both of them. . ."

"My *dear*," you broke in, and I think you were genuinely excited,
"I never knew you were Jewish!" No, not a world of
emotion—
say, for the time being, as you said, the emotion of a world.

This seems to me quite marvelous. It is a curious poetry that depends so little on typography, meter, even rhythm—and no doubt Howard would find rhyme merely an impediment to lucidity; but one often finds oneself reading along simply to find out what happens next, and this virtue is a rare one in contemporary poetry.

One legitimate criticism of Howard's work occurs when it is placed next to that of James Merrill: to wit, if a poem must resist the intelligence almost successfully, Howard's don't resist enough, are too easy—for all their allusive freight. (Ashbery skirts the whole matter by being at once wholly inviting and completely impenetrable.) Merrill's difficulty is real and earned; it is also intermittent, since he is the slave to no one habit of expression. The new book is as difficult as anything he has written, excepting "From the Cupola," and two readings of its one-hundred-page poem "The Book of Ephraim" have only begun to put me in touch with parts of this strange, often obscure but extremely attractive work.[9] My approach to it is perhaps unworthy of its elaborate design (see Helen Vendler in *NYRB,* March 18, 1976 for a good statement of it) but its best parts are in what I have always taken to be Merrill's grand style, beautifully relaxed and fully alert at the same time, as serious and committed to life as it is humorous and verbally brilliant about it. Take these two patches from part "L" of the poem, the first referring to a summer in the 1950's:

Life like the periodical not yet
Defunct kept hitting the stands. We seldom failed
To leaf through each new issue—war, election,
Starlet; write, scratch out; eat steak au poivre,
Chat with Ephraim. Above Water Street
Things were advancing in our high retreat.
We patched where snow and rain had come to call,
Renewed the flame upon the mildewed wall.
Unpacked and sat in place a bodhisattva

[9] DIVINE COMEDIES, by *James Merrill.* Atheneum. $8.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Green with age—its smile, to which clung crumbs
Of gold, like traces of a meal
Proof against the Eisenhower grin
Elsewhere so disarming. . . .

And twenty or so years later:

Remembered, is that summer we came back
Really so unlike the present one?
The friends who stagger clowning through U.S.
Customs in a dozen snapshots old
Enough to vote, so different from us
Here, now? Oh god, these days. . .
Thermometer at 90, July haze
Heavy with infamy from Washington.
Impeachment ripens round the furrowed stone
Face of a story-teller who has given
Fiction a bad name. (I at least thank heaven
For my executive privilege vis-a-vis
Transcripts of certain private hours with E.)

Verse like this, in its assurance that there *is* somebody speaking to us out of the life lived, the love spent (to borrow from an earlier Merrill poem) also preserves us from too much frustration at not following all the intricacies and privacies of "JM's" conversations with the spirit world, with affable, familiar Ephraim. So it makes a difference to have JM's chance encounter in Venice with his nephew, Wendell, which eventually is found to have occult significance ("Wendell is Ephraim's representative") first be fully delivered to us on the worldly level; as in these stanzas—note the rhyming, please:

If blood means anything, it means we dine
Together, face the music and enjoy

Strolling come evening like two genuwine
Expatriates out of Pound or Hemingway
Into the notoriously vine-

Secluded trattoria—no display,
Just bottomless carafe, and dish on dish
Produced by magic, and all night to pay.

Melon with ham, risotto with shellfish,
Cervello fritto spitting fire at us,
Black cherries' pit-deep sweetness, babyish

Skins glowing from a bowl of ice, nonplus
My footsore guest, such juicy arguments
For the dolce vita. . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I must stop, but Merrill never does: plenitude is what you feel in reading him, each to his own desires and capacities for response. Besides parts of the long poem, there are two or three others in this book which I will put in my selected Merrill anthology, already containing at least "An Urban Convalescence," "A Tenancy," "Time," "Matinees," "Up and Down," and "The Victor Dog."

Finally, Richard Wilbur, whose new book[10] has likewise things fine enough to make the selected Wilbur anthology, and who, predictably, has as I write just been reprimanded by Calvin Bedient (*New Republic,* June 5 1976) for not taking enough risks, for turning out "a prize pupil's performance." This was a fair enough criticism to make when, in the course of a lively appreciation of Wilbur's earliest volumes, Randall Jarrell made it twenty-five years ago. Repeated smugly by Bedient, after twenty-five years of steady, intelligent and beautiful persistence by Wilbur in poems and translations, it should be rejected with scorn. Bedient becomes morally indignant over Wilbur's "patronizing" of Sylvia Plath, since Sylvia wrote with "shattering originality" (says Bedient with shattering lack of originality). In fact the poem about Plath is one of the best in this volume; called "Cottage Street, 1953" it is about a tea given by Edna Ward who has invited Sylvia and Mrs. Plath (after S.P.'s suicide attempt) to meet Wilbur and his wife. I quote the last five stanzas:

> It is my office to exemplify
> The published poet in his happiness,
> Thus cheering Sylvia, who has wished to die;
> But half-ashamed, and impotent to bless,
>
> I am a stupid life-guard who has found
> Swept, to his shallows by the tide, a girl
> Who, far from shore, has been immensely drowned,
> And stares through water now with eyes of pearl.
>
> How large is her refusal; and how slight
> The genteel chat whereby we recommend
> Life, of a summer afternoon, despite
> The brewing dusk which hints that it may end.
>
> And Edna Ward shall die in fifteen years,
> After her eight-and-eighty summers of
> Such grace and courage as permit no tears,
> The thin hand reaching out, the last word *love,*
>
> Outliving Sylvia who, condemned to live,
> Shall study for a decade, as she must,
> To state at last her brilliant negative
> In poems free and helpless and unjust.

[10] THE MIND-READER, by *Richard Wilbur*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If this is a patronizing attitude written in "fusty" (Bedient's word) lines, then I've got my whole life backwards; I prefer to believe that it is humanly admirable, a fresh and compelling gesture of language, and that Bedient (who mans a fire tower in the Angeles Forest, California) can't see the woods from the trees.

Overturning the clichéd account of Wilbur as a lifeless producer of mechanical, safe, "conservative" exercises in verse, let us insist rather that he has put together a body of work in a manner unmistakably his own, confusable with no other contemporary's. Sometimes that manner is neo-classic, sometimes baroque, as in a marvelous new poem about mushrooms called "Children of Darkness," from which just a couple of moments:

> Wherever, after the deep rains,
>
> The woodlands are morose and reek of punk,
> These gobbets grow—
> Tongue, lobe, hand, hoof or butchered toe
> Amassing on the fallen branch half-sunk
> In leaf-mold, or the riddled trunk.

Carried along by the poet, one is soon moved by these mushrooms, extravagantly shaped in appropriate words. No, we are told, they are not devil's food, since

> Nowhere does water stand so clear
> As in stalked cups where pine has come to grief;
> The chanterelle
> And cèpe are not the fare of hell

but are instead "Food for the eye whose pleasant stinks abound." And even should

> They preen themselves
> On being demons, ghouls, or elves,
> The holy chiaroscuro of the wood
> Still would embrace them. They are good.

I do little more than assert merely, and though I could worry about the over-determining presence of Frost at some moments, or an over-gentle fussiness at others, those faults don't much matter; more positively they are part of Wilbur's identity as an unsafe poet who has the capacity to irritate as well as charm his readers. But "A Storm in April," "The Writer," "In Limbo," "Cottage Street, 1953," "C Minor" (my special favorite, about why we shouldn't listen to Beethoven at breakfast time), "Children of Darkness," and, by all means, "The Prisoner of Zenda" ("At the end a/ *The Prisoner of Zenda*. . .")—yes, we should embrace them. They are not free, not helpless and not unjust. They are good.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VERNON YOUNG

The Late Lamenting Wyndham Lewis

> *First Citizen:* I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud; which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue.
>
> *Coriolanus, I.* 1.

AMONG THESE SURVIVALS of so-called criticism,[1] "André Malraux" (originally published in *The Writer and The Absolute,* 1952) is perhaps the exhibit *in extremis* of Wyndham Lewis' elliptical strategy—character assassination with sterilized instruments: the establishing of guilt by association (Malraux=revolution=life in action=T.E. Lawrence=execution of an Arab); the quoting (and distortion) of an isolated passage while disregarding the character of the whole work, the whole man; the imposition on one writer of the shortcomings of another with whom close affinities are alleged (Jean-Paul Sartre is the key scapegoat here) and, prominently in this instance, the employment of another critic (principally Claude Mauriac) to ratify one's own adverse judgement—and incidentally to rattle the reader by leaving him uncertain as to whether a given statement is a paraphrase of Malraux's thought or an obliquely edited version of it!

Briefly in another context Lewis had praised the concretely focused method of the novel, *Man's Fate;* in no single parenthesis of this essay is there such a concession, nor any other, for the man who by 1952 had published his major novels and his first masterpiece of another genre (to be reshaped as *The Voices of Silence*). Of the fewer than twenty paragraphs in this seven-page essay, not one independently encounters Malraux *on the page;* the accusations (analysis would be an impertinent synonym) are largely conveyed by others (even by anti-Malraux Communists!) engaged by Lewis to support his frivolous and defamatory charge that Malraux was merely a "political flirt," that he was violent to the extent of glorifying murder as a test of complete manhood and that although he never became a member of the Communist Party he was more reprehensible (to Lewis) than Sartre, who did so—and, at the moment of writing, the only identity Malraux visibly presented to Lewis was that of "publicity chief in the entourage of the French Franco, General Charles De Gaulle" (*sic*). I shall resist the temptation to cite the numerous expletives with which this incredible document is saturated. The destructive pivot is Lewis' philistine interpretation of a Malraux aphorism reworded by Mauriac: "In

[1] ENEMY SALVOES: Selected Writings on Literature, by *Wyndham Lewis.* Edited by C. J. Fox. General Introduction by C. H. Sisson. Barnes & Noble. $17.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imposing his personality on the external world man finds the only outlet which remains open to him, his one and only chance of escaping—imperfectly—from Nothingness." Lewis, triumphant, proceeds to attribute Nothingness to the man, Malraux, when what Malraux (or Mauriac) had been contending was that Man, inhabitant of Nothingness, creates the destiny that rescues him from the anonymity of a mote in space. Lewis retorts:

> How this *action* theory [?] of "imposing your personality upon the world" may very easily develop into a quite substantial *power-complex* may be judged from pondering these further words of Malraux's (*sic*). "To lead, to be he who decides, to coerce. That is to live."

These "further words" I *have* pondered and find nothing in them with which to quarrel. "To lead" *is* a good thing, "to be he who decides, to coerce"; that *is* to live: it's one way, it's a way Lewis himself coveted; since, as a literary intellectual, he was seldom able to coerce anybody, could make nothing happen, he named the grapes as sour. Leadership *is* an admirable position; coercion is as much the prerogative of a teacher or critic as it is of a sergeant-major or a Minister of Propaganda. Lewis wanted it construed in one channel, negatively, as the symptom of brutality or autocracy. "How many people" he dared to ask, "were there in Western Europe between the wars nursing feverish power-complexes, beside the Duces and Führers?" We don't know how many there may have been but Wyndham Lewis was one—it's in his dossier forever.[2]

Lewis' animosity, ranging from medium rare to overdone, was not restricted to such as Malraux, Sartre, Orwell and Hemingway who sought political salvation or were cognizant at least that political action was a pregnant factor in the daily life of mankind. Sooner or later he vented his spite on anyone who wasn't going his way, even on D. H. Lawrence who, to a degree, was!—which Lewis failed to see, preoccupied as he was with the single aspect of Lawrence he loathed. As publisher and polemicist, Lewis was in the vanguard of those effecting a tidal movement in that oceanic inundation of literature and art which soon characterized the Modern Age, born in agony and earthquake with War I. That no one (in the literary world) except himself truly understood the nature of Modernism Lewis shortly decided. What Erich Heller has aptly called the Discovery and Colonization of Inwardness—perhaps the best broad definition we have—would have been summarily rejected by Lewis (a Parnassian at heart), for he was speedily quarreling, at length or intermittently, and

[2] January–April, 1931, Lewis wrote a defense of the Nazis in "Time and Tide," later published in book form, wherein he announced, among other idiocies, that the Third Reich favored an "aristocracy of the intellect." From the subsequent damage his reputation suffered, Lewis learned slowly; thirteen years later he was defending Stalin, who had "a working state-system, with the air purged of humbug." (The air was purged, that's for sure!) See *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis* edited by W. K. Rose (Methuen, 1963). Letter to Gerty T. Cori, Aug. 20, 1944.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without shred of compromise, with all the writers of his day who shared many of his assumptions and whom he should have part-time admired, even if their aims were not in all particulars identical: Pound, Eliot, Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, ad infinitum. *He would not share.* With no little sophistry in the argument, he proposed an "external approach to things"; for him this meant "relying upon the evidence of the *eye* rather than of the more emotional organs of sense . . . . And as for pure satire [his *sine qua non*] there the eye is supreme." Distinctions of aesthetic theory and practise were not seriously being defended here. He simply could not, or did not wish to, see people except through a distorting lens. Often, in his fiction, he wrote as if he had envisioned a scene with his *painter's* eye, then translated it into a verbal equivalent. Strictly read, his prose, excepting that of two or three novels and the short stories, more purely addresses the ear than the eye. His characters tend to become magnetic fields, around which cluster *words*, barely contaminated by common associations of flesh or speech. The following passage, queerly splendid, is from *Childermass* (1928)—two men are traversing an unspecified landscape.

> The scene is steadily redistributed, vamped from position to position intermittently at its boundaries. It revolves upon itself in a slow material maelstrom. Satters sickly clings to his strapping little champion: sounds rise on all hands like the sharp screech of ripping calico, the piercing alto of the slate-pencil, or the bassooning of imposing masses, frictioning each other as they slowly turn in concerted circles.
>
> Never before have there been so many objects of uncertain credentials or origin: as it grows more intricate Pullman whisks them forwards, peering into the sky for lost stars twirling about as he has to face two ways at once on the *qui vive* for the new setting, fearing above all reflections, on the look-out for optical traps, lynx-eyed for threatening ambushes of anomalous times behind the orderly furniture of Space or hidden in objects to confute the solid at the last moment, every inch a pilot.[3]

For my part, I can no more read several pages of this with undivided attention than I can a comparable number from Lawrence Durrell or Vladimir Nabokov. The ostensible subjects of the narrative are blurred and discomposed by the opacity of the language; a day later I can't remember what [if] on earth I've been reading!

Since we learn much about a writing man if we find that he prefers

[3] Quoted from the Methuen edition, *The Human Age*, Volume I, 1956, p. 48. Hugh Kenner, in his *Wyndham Lewis* (New Directions, 1954)—a concise and commendably neutral study—traps the essence of this style when he writes that "Lewis' fiction as a whole concerns itself with gradations of unreality . . . with groups of people engaged in explicating by their actions some theorem in the Metaphysics of the Void." Of his own persona (unarguably) in a short story, Lewis opined, "He was very fond of reality; but he was like a man very fond of what did not at all agree with him." By a horrible stroke of irony, Lewis, before the end of his life, could no longer rely "upon the evidence of the *eye*." He became quite blind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Homer to Plato, Dante to Goethe, or Goethe to Rousseau, the backward reach of Lewis' admiration should be revelatory. His ancestral mentor, *he* fondly thought, was Montaigne, with whose temper he closely identified his own: pathetic identification, when you compare the Frenchman's moderate skepticism and his open-ended doubt of his own doubt—*Que sais-je?*—with the brook-no-argument salvos of Lewis. If not more comical, just as strange: Lewis' Shakespeare, a reluctant Elizabethan, compound of Montaigne and Machiavelli, who just *happened* to be born under the Tudors; suppressing a ferocious yawn, the man from Stratford tossed off thirty-odd plays, the best of which had as their subject Roman or British rulers whose problems and personalities actually bored him though he had a remote sympathy for his tiresome heroes when they were most nauseated by the weight of office, life and time. The greater number of his kings "had come to a violent and stupid end, clamoring about their divine right and their kingly ways, defiant or idiotically remorseful." He "probably" thought little more of these kings "than Gibbon did of his gallery of despots." While "tragically participating" in their experiences, he had no substantial confidence in their actuality in time and place, no more than he had for his commoners. "They were much more mirrors held up to his tired and baffled mind than they were the mirrors of any nature that he objectively could know." (We have Lewis' word for it!) Richard II's torrential grief and his image of the "little pin" penetrating so easily the life-wall and hence, "farewell King," was not conceivably an emotional concept to be entertained by the Plantagenet; it was merely "a reflection of the critical experiences of the poet." And so on until the end of Shakespeare's days (in the theatre) when, by Lewis' reasoning, he was equally uninvolved with the qualms of Macbeth, the deflation of Othello, the hyena scatology of Iago, the diatribes of Timon or the pride of Coriolanus; the despair, resentment and bleak disgust were Shakespeare's alone (for aught that Lewis says, he was born bleak!): they had no objective correlative in characters who might plausibly be expected to share such emotions! (Lewis is peculiarly diffident towards any conviction which *Coriolanus* should have conveyed to him and he was quite misguided, I'd say, in his refusal to find immense dramatic pathos in that great play.)

Naturally, it is Lewis, himself, who sees Shakespeare's kings as coming to a "stupid end . . . idiotically remorseful." As for the "little pin," *any* image might be described as "a reflection of the critical experience of the poet," without thereby being exempt as the probable experience of a Plantagenet—just as *Lewis'* images are reflections of *his* experience of Shakespeare! And that experience will permit no shade of political discernment in his subject. ". . . Nor was he [Shakespeare] innocent enough to suppose that he was living beneath a more oppressive system than the next, the next after that, or the one before it." I think we can safely conclude that Shakespeare was sufficiently "innocent" to be convinced that he was *not* living under as oppressive a system as Englishmen had been, let's say, between the mid-fourteenth century and the end of the fifteenth (*Richard III*, for example, displays a too ready acceptance of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard's wholly malign character as reconstructed by Tudor historians). Shakespeare was in all breathing things a man of his time. Lewis' attempt to make him radically detached from his governing subject (the vicissitudes of the power-driven man) which, with passionate intensity, he pursued for forty years, is preposterous. Whatever else, Shakespeare was a Tudor propagandist—not a hired one, he didn't need to be: like most of his contemporaries he was fully aware that he was living at a crucial hour in the stabilization of the nation-state, prepared by Henry VII and maintained, despite reversals and calamity under Edward VI and Mary Tudor, by Henry VIII and Elizabeth. As much as, if not more than, his fellow Elizabethans, he must have had a wholesome dread of civil anarchy and a return to the lawless disunity of Richard II's reign and the decades of the York-Lancaster feuds. (One reason it took nearly a half-century to disseat the Stuarts was precisely because the English, until forced by royal obstinacy, were reluctant to plunge the country into another era of internecine warfare.)

Richard II is supposed by many to have been a warning to Essex and his party; whether or not this was so, the play was in any case an object lesson of the disaster which overtakes a monarch when recklessly indifferent to the obligations he has constitutionally inherited. That Shakespeare's Richard was driven by grief into reams of poetry does not alter Shakespeare's view of him as a fallible *man,* fallen from grace. That most of Shakespeare's later protagonists (and many of his earlier ones) discover at the ninth hour that they are, after all, mortal, that the glories of their blood and state are shadows, not substantial things, is scarcely an inference that *as* princes or tribunes they had negligible value for the playwright! Lewis drew nearly all his nutshell demonstrations of Shakespeare's "tired and baffled mind" from the late plays, relegating seven-eighths of the poet's production, belittling the diversity with which Shakespeare embodied throngs of common humanity, eluding the prevailing convention of "graves, worms and epitaphs" that permeated *all* Elizabethan and Jacobean literature and—most seriously, for Lewis' argument—suppressing the important circumstance that among these late plays (together with the world-weariness, the misanthropic outcries against human vanity and ingratitude and the suspicion that life is a sort of phantasmal dream—all these the natural heritage of any clear-sighted man approaching the end of his span—among these very plays which, for Lewis, illustrated nothing but anarchy and lordly indifference towards concepts of law and station) are two of the most eloquent expositions of a necessary order in the civil scheme, destroyed by political man at his peril, ever composed by Shakespeare: namely, his facetious adaptation of Plutarch on the primacy of the belly, argued by Menenius Agrippa (*Coriolanus,* I. 1.) and the magnificent discourse on "Degree" by Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* (I. 3.).

Why was it mandatory for Lewis to see Shakespeare as a man with no vital interest in the multitudes he animated, as a playwright of no visible development or trace of philosophy, as a poet of no viable connection with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the peopled land which had fertilized him? We need not exert ourselves to find an answer, pardonably Freudian, to this riddle. The artist, especially in our time, frequently entertains a sense of himself as autonomous, unrelated, all but unconditioned: hence his normal fear of the *critic,* who minimizes his personal stature by *striving* to relate him—to his culture, his contemporaries or predecessors, his parental sources, whatever. Lewis suffered, to an exaggerated degree, from the familiar form of solipsism; he spent a lifetime sweating to *dissociate* himself from anyone whom he might seem to resemble, anyone from whom he had learned anything, anyone who had committed the same errors as he or anyone who had contrived similar answers to the same vexed questions he asked: "as if a man were author of himself/ And knew no other kin." Lewis' childhood situation was clearly the prime mover behind his unremitting effort to reject all upon whom he could be said to have leaned. Father, divorced from Mother, was virtually absent as the boy grew up, appearing once in a while, like an aloof God, to write a cheque, then disappearing into the blue. "Later," W. K. Rose has succinctly put it,[4] "as the boy became a young man, their contacts—and the cheques—dwindled." . . .

No father on the scene but happily a doting mother (to whom young Lewis, in letters from Paris, confided freely, if archly, his sexual conquests!). The sequel is classic. Lewis, growing to manhood fatherless, over-developed his superego and, further, expected the world to indulge him, as Mother had done, without reproof or limit. Whenever it did not oblige he expended a tireless amount of energy disputing and/or repudiating everyone who dared criticise a syllable of his work or take its character lightly. He seems never to have overlooked a slight, challenging all deprecations, however *en passant* (the letters make this abundantly clear.). At the same time, like so many male others deprived of fatherly authority, he not only lived his days searching for another father-figure and, of course, speedily impeaching all possibilities (especially among *living* candidates); he also craved to become a father-model himself (intellectually, at any rate); the evidence is plentiful in his correspondence with a young Finnish writer living in Canada, sustained over a surprising number of years because, it would appear, this chap listened to Lewis obediently, gave him no lip and, above all, was no professional threat to him whatever.

One of the few "modern" (but safely dead) writers Lewis positively admired was Flaubert. "To him almost everything and everybody are suspect, except the artist . . . . (At the mere sight of a politician he would turn aside and violently spit)." Here, then, was the Lewis ideal: a Shakespeare shaped in his own image with a tired, baffled and hating mind; a Flaubert who tolerated nobody and turned aside to spit. We can be sure that by "politician" Lewis meant the gamut, from statesman to local party hack. Never in his life had Lewis a glimpse of Disraeli's conception that "A nation was a work of art and of time." If he had such a glimpse, he found it expedient to bury it out of sight lest it impede his solitary, sacred

[4] In his introduction to Part I. *The Letters,* op. cit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

progress across acres of nothingness. The nation did not exist; history had no mutations; the world at common large did not exist; nobody existed, if Lewis disallowed them. Inevitably he came to doubt his own existence. *Self Condemned,* his last novel, based patently on his miserable interlude in Canada (from which he personally escaped in relief to perfidious Albion), ends with its protagonist accepting That Teaching Job at an American university (the like of which Lewis had once begged for, though he despised academics as heartily as any other tribe) where, he closes his story, "the Faculty had no idea that it was a glacial shell of a man who had come to live among them, mainly because they were themselves unfilled with anything more than a little academic stuffing."

". . . and to be partly proud". A pity. Lewis could write with exalted acerbity when the bit was out of his mouth. We might have need of him now if we could more easily dismiss his foolishness and accept his sagacity. Not a critic to be durably relied upon, his occasional flash insights were memorable. In this volume, his tribute to the Russian novelists is the most sound. More pertinent than many of the more scandalous essays on his literary foes is a letter which might well have been included, in which, to the point and comprehensively, he exposed, in American circles, academic circles not least, "the ferocious and aggressive pride in the possession of money."[5] And after he had weathered his demented toleration of Hitler and Stalin he recognized, more explicitly than D. H. Lawrence, that Communism, "government by inferiority complex," was linked in our time with the cult of woman, the cult of youth, the cult of the colored skin, a quadrivium expressing a world-wide revulsion from maturity, from individual and ethnic self-confidence, from the sovereignty of hard-won intelligence—and from the alleviating grace of irony.

[5] *The Letters*, op. cit., pp. 497–8.

To Our Readers

Two new books by associates of THE HUDSON REVIEW have recently been published. In accordance with our policy, they will not be reviewed in these pages, but are listed here for the interest of our readers:

EDMUND T. DELANEY (and Charles Lockwood): *Greenwich Village: A Photographic Guide.* With Photographs by George Roos. Dove Publications. $3.00.

CHARLES W. MILLARD: *The Sculpture of Edgar Degas.* Princeton University Press. $19.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARVIN MUDRICK

Mad Dogs and Anglo Shrinks

FOR SUCH A GATHERING of wide-eyed puffs and blurbs—Coles's usual item is three to five pages of unsparing praise of still another non-epoch-making recent book—this is a very cryptic title[1] (followed by a Table of Contents that favors cryptic and reversible chapter headings: "The Artist as Psychoanalyst," "Faith as Doubt," "Piaget as God"). But then Coles isn't content to be (what he is) a working psychiatrist and an unavoidable contributor of five hundred easy pieces on psychiatry to the liberal magazines; he intends to be also a writer who can handle ideas and perspectives, a thinker or, if not, at least the thinking man's psychiatrist.

Consider the last two and most ambitious of the pieces. Both are essays rather than reviews, both are long, both treat the same undeniably solemn subject (the socialization of children); most conspicuously, each opens with a startling historical analogy designed to strike us dumb with the author's originality, range, and boldness. "Children and Political Authority," for example, begins by citing Simone Weil on the similarities between ancient Rome and Nazi Germany, in either case "a ruthless military machine, harnessed to 'a centralized state' " that threatens to destroy all the good little independent countries; and it goes ahead to propose—from here Coles is on his own—that today's Rome or Nazi Germany is of course America, in the face of which blacks and Hopis and Navahos are today's good little independent countries:

> Rather like the Rome which Simone Weil portrayed, America is for a few thousand Hopis not only an enormous empire, but with respect to the smallest details of everyday life, a constant presence. Sometimes anthropological descriptions of a particular kind of Indian culture (Navaho, Hopi, Pueblo) manage to convey successfully the philosophical and psychological distinctiveness of a given people, as against the ways and assumptions of the "dominant culture," yet fail to account for the inevitable mix of two worlds that comes about—the point, for instance, in a child's mental life where he is not only a Hopi, but a Hopi who lives in the state of Arizona, one of the fifty United States. Unlike their white middle-class counterparts, the Hopi boys I have met don't draw missiles, don't crave airplane models, don't collect scary "horror"

[1] THE MIND'S FATE, by *Robert Coles*. Little, Brown. $10.00. Georges Bernanos supplies the title and the epigraph, one of those wingless flights in which the French make like philosophers: "The mind's fate is, after all, a person's fate. We are drawn along by our private visions, but beyond them stretch almost infinitely for each of us the vast and compelling mystery of chance and circumstance." ("Stretches" would be correct, but what the hell.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> statues, luminous Frankensteins, and on and on. They don't even play "war": Hollywood notwithstanding, there are no feathers on their heads, no bow and arrow encounters, no effort to defy invisible cowboys. They do play—a version of hide-and-seek is popular; they also help herd sheep, and they walk and run and climb. They are not averse to teasing and taunting, however "peaceful" they are taught to be; and very important, they learn, thereby, that they are Hopi and American, however incongruous the combination.

Which, after a dozen perplexed reperusals, seems to boil down to an assertion that teasing and taunting are unknown in primitive cultures, are indeed the first of the poison fruits imported from "the dominant culture." At any rate on pastoral uplands hark! while the young brave speaks with unforked tongue about the dominant-cultural neo-Nazi bullyboys of the jingo U.S. (i.e. us):

> "Anglo kids, they won't let you get away with anything. Tell them something, and fast as lightning and loud as thunder, they'll say, I'm better than you, so there! My father says it's always been like that. My grandfather remembers the Anglos and their horses; they had them for the soldiers. They'd ride through our reservation. Now they have Air Force bases in New Mexico, all over, and they have their atom bombs stored in the mountains. You go near the places where they do their atomic tests, and they'll tell you to get away fast. . . ."

How seamlessly the native American tells the Anglo shrink's portable Sony what it aches to hear! White America has much to answer for, not least the waxworks patness of the evidence that white Americans like Coles solicit against it.

In "The Outer and Inner World," Coles's opening analogy isn't quite so grand as the Roman-Nazi-Anglo Axis but it's just as vulgar and alarmingly more aberrant. Black or Chicano or Indian or Appalachian children are, he says, to white bourgeois America as Freud and his followers were to *fin-de-siècle* bourgeois Vienna: an oppressed "minority group" ("Freud had to endure not only social rejection but constant economic insecurity over a significant stretch of his life"), a band of "outsiders"—

> I do not wish to belabor [he means "labor"] a comparison which has only a limited value [Coles has an uneasy feeling that he'd better protect himself against the mad dogs in the audience], but I think there is a good deal in the history of psychoanalytic psychiatry that ought to make us especially sensitive to the way children who belong to our so-called "minority groups" grow up and come to feel about the world they so often have to take on against great odds. . . .

True, Coles doesn't mention the name of the street gang Freud joined at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

puberty (The Beautiful Dreamers) or young Sigi's hassles with the fuzz on Saturday nights in the Wienerwald or his inability to turn up an honest job during the Austrian recession of 1867–85, but all the other resemblances between hawks and handsaws get a vigorous if incoherent airing:

> How does an outsider deal with a world he both lives in and feels separated from? How does an outsider keep his head up . . . ?
>
> Those questions are not new or surprising [No kidding! growl the mad dogs out front]. . . . Still, for black children . . . [they] are not of only casual interest. Certainly they are not asked rhetorically or philosophically, any more than Freud was indulging himself or being frivolous when he established the Psychological Wednesday Society, a prelude to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, and took pains to estimate from time to time how far along toward acceptance and respectability psychoanalysis had come. . . .

Coles's mistreatment of analogy is matched by his mistreatment of direct quotation. In the course of the essay he quotes at length from what is ostensibly a single statement made to him on a single occasion by an eight-year-old black boy in Mississippi; it's a statement as perfectly ideological, and therefore as pat to Coles's purpose, as the Indian's about atom bombs; but, after uninterrupted pages of it, the field investigator pauses for a moment to remark that it was "pulled together from several conversations and put into 'our' (grammatical, if often less expressive) language." (Are the Hopi and Pueblo statements in the other essay "pulled together" in the same way? No comment from Coles, but they too are grammatical and inexpressive.) So it isn't the eight-year-old black boy after all, and exactly how it isn't or who he really is we'll never know. Probably Coles himself doesn't know or care: his humaneness is general (*such* a nice man!) and before the fact; he already has what he needs, and everything else just goes to show; those stacked cassettes on the investigator's shelves are like the psychiatrist's raw files, none of the layman's business.

"Whenever I feel bad," says the hero of Walker Percy's novel *The Moviegoer*, "I go to the library and read controversial periodicals. . . ."

> Down I plunk myself with a liberal weekly at one of the massive tables, read it from cover to cover, nodding to myself whenever the writer scores a point. Damn right, old son, I say, jerking my chair in approval. Pour it on them. Then up and over to the rack for a conservative monthly and down in a fresh cool chair to join the counterattack. Oh ho, say I, and hold fast to the chair arm: that one did it: eviscerated! And then out and away into the sunlight, my neck prickling with satisfaction.

As at criminal trials each side even has its own (if you'll pardon the expression) committed psychiatrist. In the conservative journal Percy's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hero will be savoring the ironic and rebarbative Thomas Szasz (*so* hard-nosed!), in the liberal journal the grave and compassionate Robert Coles (*so* quietly strong!), and in either writer he will find a world of such dreamlike unity and immunity that his gratitude will stop at nothing. It's a world in which partisanship is the game and everything that scores a point is permitted. When, for instance, Coles is stuck for a last paragraph to put his unusually messy and helpless piece on prisons out of its misery ("We still do not know why one man falls sick and another stays reasonably well, why one person's violence becomes a disaster for all of us and another's can be channeled into useful forms of expression" such as ice hockey), when for the harassed part-time writer routine closes in and the deadline is breathing down his neck, then nothing is sacred and even religion—which usually belongs in the *conservative* journals—isn't out of the question. Here's how it's done: the liberal psychiatrist, having failed to make any sense out of prisons or prison reform, slips an irrelevant and spiritual quotation in from where but *Crime and Punishment* and for the sake of an ending pretends to have found, of all things! God in those seminal words of Dostoevsky's ("I fucked a bear for the FBI and found God")—

> I suppose such words can be dismissed [by mad dogs] as embarrassing sentiment, the prerogative of soft, muddleheaded visionaries—which brings to mind an added embarrassment. We are fast approaching the year 2000 [this was written in 1970, when we were all moving at a terrific speed though we've slowed down since], which will again remind us how long ago it was that a child was born whom others eventually scorned, arraigned, and punished with the harshest penalty, only to find the man revealed as God Himself.

Aside from this last-paragraph tribute to the Father and the Son in his otherwise nonsectarian prison piece, Coles's most reverent performance is a review of Erik Erikson's *Insight and Responsibility*. Coles seems to idolize Erikson and one hopes he'll be inspired to turn out a clear and sensible sentence or two; but nothing doing, he rapidly tramples any hope of lucidity: "In the way . . . Erikson discusses Freud's friendship with Fliess, and in the way he tells about the relevance of psychoanalysis to other fields, he emerges with a lucidity qualified only by its respectfulness not only to Freud but to all who seek after knowledge." Common decency precludes a close analysis of this sentence; but Coles does seem to be saying that respect precludes lucidity. He also calls to our attention "the haunting title of 'Identity and Uprootedness in Our Time,' " a title that is hauntingly all jargon and no light, doubtless as pristine and opaque as the Holy Ghost. He also declares that Erikson's "Human Strength and the Cycle of Generations" is "as daring a piece as one will ever find in this jargon-filled era," for "Who else, I really wonder, on this confused planet is now writing about such matters as what makes for man's stamina and vitality, and how his qualities of mind and spirit are nourished and transmitted over the centuries?"; but Coles doesn't really wonder, be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cause he knows that he himself and the thousands of others who manufacture the public-spirited jargon of our confused planet are writing about such matters day in and day out, unmercifully, with the heedless and presumptuous respectfulness that strangles lucidity in its cradle: "For some, such terms are the hackneyed soporifics of sermons. For others they are self-consciously or even militantly shunned in favor of ideas and words hardly as graceful and often simply a crying bore. To breathe new life into words like Love is no easy job in our sometimes perversely complicated intellectual climate. . . ." Even Coles's Navahos talk better English.

"I remembered," writes Coles in his Introduction,

> a remark I had heard from William Carlos Williams years earlier: "If I had it over, I might try psychiatry." He was quick to reverse himself, to say he didn't think he had the patience, the "knack," he put it, for such a specialty; but he was vastly interested. At the time I was far more interested in Dr. Williams' poetry (about which I wrote my undergraduate thesis) than psychiatry; if I eventually chose one of his two professions, I had scant information [sic], when I did so, of following his advice. (The remark about what *he* might do if another medical life were permitted him was, I now realize, offered me as tactful advice.)

The reader has scant information of giving Dr. Coles any advice except to avoid poetry and other mental disciplines like the plague, and to entertain the possibility that what Dr. Williams meant was what he said.

Notes on Contributors

KJELL ESPMARK's* recent poetry collections form a trilogy: *The Public Debate*, *Voices under the Ground* and *The Inexorable Paradise*. The poems published here come from the last volume. A Scottish poet and translator, ROBIN FULTON lives in Scandinavia. His most recent volume of poems is entitled *Tree-Lines*.

OCTAVIO PAZ divides his time between Harvard, where he teaches, and Mexico City. A poet, philosopher, essayist and diplomat, he has recently completed a book of criticism on Marcel Duchamp. ELIOT WEINBERGER is co-editor of *Montemora* and translator of Paz's *Eagle or Sun?*, which will be published by New Directions in a bilingual edition this fall.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE's latest book is a thoroughly revised second edition of *The Odes of Pindar*, translated with an introduction (University of Chicago Press).

MICHAEL VAN WALLEGHEN*, an associate professor of English at the University of Illinois, has recently published *The Wichita Poems* (University of Illinois Press).

A new collection by FREDERICK MORGAN, *Poems of the Two Worlds*, will be published in January, 1977, by the University of Illinois Press.

HANS CARL ARTMANN's* numerous works include a collection of poems, *ein lilienweisser brief aus lincolnshire;* plays, *die fahrt zur insel nantucket;* and prose pieces, *How much, Schatzi?* DERK WYNAND* teaches Creative Writing at the University

(*Continued on page 480*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PETER GLASSMAN

Solidarity with the Solitary

At one or another level of intensity most American men have played and loved the game of basketball. But like most sports, basketball offers itself to its players less as a game than as a mode of contact with those powers and limitations of body, judgment, and will which together comprise at least one form of the knowable personality.

One of the great appeals of sport is that it induces a certain democracy of sensibility among its participants. Every athlete, without respect to the quality of his physical resourcefulness or to the subtlety of his interpreting consciousness, enters while he plays a sport into an approximately similar energy of assumption about himself and his behavior. No one, no matter how blunt of character or of mind, can play an athletic game merely by way of achieving exertion. A sport's choreography of demand, its various requirements of attitude expressed in movement, make of its characteristic activity something like an act. As the word argues and implies, athletic "recreation" involves for each of its participants not merely refreshment or relaxation, but a fundamental impulse of definition, a basic declaration of one's experience of identity. Each time that an athlete accepts the particular form of a game, each time that he moves his body and his mind in sympathy with a presented and comprehended dramatization of human possibility, he places into expression the accumulated supply of his knowledge, his desire, and his grace. In this sense the games of human sport, like the ritual forms of animals' play, elicit and represent the nature of one's separate function within the species cleanly and perhaps almost completely. For both public and private purposes of meaning and of use, athletic recreation involves nothing less than the successive rediscovery and restatement of one's sensibility of life.

So democratic is this experience of game, so general is this engagement of a sport's ethical significance, that no utterly selfish communion with its systems of support and sanction quite is possible. Whatever varieties of anger, even of aggressiveness, one may come to direct against one's opponent in contest, within every event of sport one feels joined to one's antagonist in an essential emotion of acceptance. Without the opposing declaration of the Other, after all, one should be denied the form against which to fashion and to declare oneself. Similarly, and exquisitely, one may discover among one's teammates in team games intense and often elsewhere irrecoverable sentiments of sympathy. To work within the form and the passions of a group for the patterns and for the success of one's personal knowledge, to produce but a portion of a composite display of gracefulness, is to enter into an experience of social cognition which little else in one's national, political, or spiritual life seems able any longer to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

extend. However temporarily, the bonds of this sort of juncture almost always cross imposed lines of race, or of economic privilege, or, as I have said, of individual sensibility.

The game of basketball no longer is an absolutely American sport. Many other nations play and enjoy the sport, some with great technical skill. No other people, though, so imaginatively or so exuberantly has received the sport's stunning possibilities for personal and for social expressiveness. Of all people we most instinctively have felt drawn to the game's language. Basketball's repertoire of movement attracts our vocabulary of identity; its rhetoric of motion engages our idioms of assumption and of need. Americans chiefly love, I think, the game's demand for personal initiative seized from amidst circumstances of fierce speed and, usually, of overcrowded space. We love, I think, the game's insistence upon individual creativity taken from amidst ritualized group action and reaction. We love the game's power to confer sexual authority outside of the structures of explicit sexual activity. We love the game's reluctance overly to reward—or overly to penalize—any individual moment of activity. (It requires profound skill successfully to score a field goal in the sport, or successfully to prevent a field goal from becoming scored. But the sport awards little to either expression of ability; and, in any case, the occasions of the game are such that the most accomplished movement of person or of group may become reproduced in its final effect of points by the most fortuitous happenstance.) This all is to suggest that American players and audiences perhaps typically respond to the game from a quiet but a confident persuasion that basketball reproduces in manageable scale many of both the burdens and the joys of American life. The game places approximately similar premium to that of the culture upon brutally difficult pace; upon self-control *and* self-release; upon the husbanding of resources amidst the constant expense of resources; upon the continual expression of self within the continual solicitation of the social.[1]

*

Bill Bradley plays basketball professionally for the New York Knickerbockers. Bradley's career has been especially notable because his skills, although consummately effective at the college-level, have not been of an order which in other team environments should have made for conspicuous success. The Knickerbockers, though, complement their forward by practicing a variety of play which puts to use more systematic concepts of group deployment than most other professional teams can sustain. The Knicks do not organize their play precisely about Bradley. But his teammates know the boundaries of Bradley's abilities, and they organize their game in such a way as to exploit the occasions which his skills create

[1] This is not to suggest that the nation has organized the playing of the game in a responsible way. At every level of its supervised organization basketball, as every other of our sports, systematically is violated in its gracefulness and in its meaning. The governance of sport in America remains in a situation of great, and of greatly unnecessary, scandal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without depending upon them for their corporate success. With the Knicks Bradley often has been devastating as a player, and always he has been effective.

Bradley's history of play has been interesting, too, because he has seemed so intellectual, and so intellectually generous, an athlete. I mean by this to remark not simply that Bradley consistently works to release his teammates for offensive and defensive opportunities. I mean as well to suggest that even in its more nearly self-referring aspects Bradley's game has seemed creative in intelligence out of all proportion to his physical skills. One detects upon his face the signs of a force of thought before and while he drives, or sets, or tries to achieve position on the floor. One sees his expression work with the effort of self-demand. One discovers as one watches him play that Bradley consciously strains to produce the effectiveness of his action within the flow of his team. More gifted players, such as Walt Frazier or Earl Monroe, who are the team's creative geniuses, so fully are skilled, and exist in such graceful physical and spiritual relation with their skills, that they require none of Bradley's more purely willful, as it were his intellectual, resourcefulness.

As I have tried to suggest, one is struck as well by Bradley's generosity of mind as he plays. During his games his expression works not only with strain of self-command but as well with admiration of others. Occasionally Bradley actually laughs when his team performs its ritualized patterns well. When teammates or even opponents perform extraordinarily difficult movements Bradley makes odd and most engaging gestures of responsive gladness. He shakes his head, for example, with something of a spectator's puzzled celebrativeness. Or he opens his eyes with surprise. Or he simply permits his body to express happy bewilderment before another's quality. Careful about his own talents, Bradley plays the game with, and I think for, others'—almost, it sometimes seems, on behalf of others'.

Bradley now has written a book which brings the generosity of his spirit into more explicit forms of language than those which are available within his sport.[2] *Life on the Run* incidentally details Bradley's participation in a three-week portion of the 1973–74 season of professional basketball. But more importantly the book undertakes to express Bradley's sense of experience.

Life on the Run speaks at length and with charm of what Bradley describes as his "involvement with the complexity of team ball," of his involvement with the way in which the game's emphasis may be made to shift by such minds as his own "from muscle to quickness, from pure individual skill to coordinated, intelligent group responses." The book works from this provided frame of the game to examine the "intelligent group responses" to the playing of the sport which Bradley's team shares, and to his team's various attitudes about the routines of life which shape participation in the sport at the professional level. Too, the book speaks

[2] LIFE ON THE RUN, by *Bill Bradley*. Quadrangle Press. $8.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fluently and finely of the personal histories of Bradley's particular "group"—of their joys and denials, of their largely shared structures of hope and of sadness. And the work celebrates the sport itself on admirably located grounds: for its power to bring "body and mind in balance"; for its exposure of "the limits of self-reliance, selfishness, and irresponsibility"; for its insistence upon "making the group adjustments necessary to exist in a constantly changing environment"; for its invocations of "smooth and effortless grace"; for its revelations of "the beauty of a body in movement," its whole wonderful "flirtation with flamboyance."

As I have said, though, *Life on the Run* is most affecting for its evocation of Bill Bradley himself. For the book extends to Bradley, as the act of playing basketball itself evidently no longer can, a field within which fully to develop his considerably interesting attitudes about the American nation, and his yet more interesting instincts of relation to that which he repeatedly describes as the "situations" of his existence as an athlete, as a citizen, and as a being. With alert and lovely ire Bradley writes of his gradual exposure to our nation's sickening bigotry against human beings, and to our nation's insipid physical squalor. Particularly he speaks to our country's virtually institutional mechanisms of isolation and loneliness. Time and again he departs from the frame of his sport to focus upon individual lonely people whom he has encountered in his life as an athlete, or to focus upon circumstances of American profession which have seemed to him in a programmatic way to promote loneliness. Travelling salespeople, soldiers, actors, waitresses, tourists, stewardesses, groupies, other athletes, himself: Bradley's book, and apparently his mind, primarily are populated by people whose "life no longer holds excitement, or escape, or independence."

Obviously Bradley plays basketball, as now he writes, at least in part to relieve his own experience of aloneness. Bradley loves his sport, this is to suggest, chiefly because it superimposes its graceful systems of provided communion with self and with others upon his intimate sensibility of isolation. "The locker room has become a kind of home for me," Bradley reports, "not simply a resting place. I often enter tense and uneasy, disturbed by some event of the day. Slowly my worries fade. . . . I relax; my concerns lost among relationships which are close and real but never intimate; lost among the constants of an athlete's life." The appeal of his actual play has been yet more directly soothing for Bradley. "Playing creates a release for my emotional energy," he remarks. "I have become dependent on the action, the physical contact, and the verbal bantering of the game . . . I pressed my physical and emotional life into basketball alone, and it made for a very intense feeling." Whatever the extent of his solidarity with the solitary, Bradley understands that his own status has been privileged; that he has received from his private experience of profession a "remarkable range of human interaction," a splendid "unity" with himself and with his teammates, and a sublime "creative freedom."

But American as he is—Bradley was raised, indeed, as a small-town Missouri Calvinist—this gentle urban star suffers a touching guilt before

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his after all earned privilege. It strikes him that his very freedom from the life of the common human routine may prohibit him from participation in the authentic human process. In his book's most striking moment, he confesses, "To me, every day is a struggle to keep in touch with life's subtleties." Bradley seems hardly to realize that not only insulated athletes find it difficult appropriately to respond to the delicate distinctiveness of others' existences. But that does not diminish either the significance or the quality of his lovely insistence that *he* at least learn to engage the lives of his fellows and the modalities of time and space through which he moves in the way of full and sympathetic communion. Bradley's approach to his game generously has served this good and necessary wish. *Life on the Run* yet more expansively consolidates Bradley's decency of spirit. As he remarks in his book, "loneliness can be overcome only by reaching out for contact." In this sweet and serious work of his mind Bradley vindicates and greatly extends the more nearly primal versions of "contact" which he has enjoyed as one of our nation's most gifted athletes.

Life on the Run seems to me a most important work both in its celebrative and in its subversive intentions. Certainly it is a work which, as Roger Sale has remarked in the *New York Review of Books,* one must not domesticate by receiving as simply a "sports book." It often has been said of Bill Bradley that he means to enter the nation's political life when he retires from the game which he plays so well. That possibility perhaps had seemed something of an obscenity when it had appeared that an athlete had hoped to capitalize upon his celebrity solely for exploitative purposes. *Life on the Run* makes it clear that Bill Bradley is anything but exploitative in his imagination. The work legitimizes Bradley's large ambition, if indeed it still may be felt, by declaring as it does that the gracefulness of Bradley's play proceeds directly from his intelligence, and that the selflessness of his sport extends to his character. This humane and responsible book makes nothing less than a platform for its author's further scales of possibility.

Notes on Contributors *(cont.)*

of Victoria, Canada. A poet and translator, he has published two books, *Locus* and *Snowscapes.*

SAMUEL HAZO, a National Book Award finalist in 1973, is the author of seven books of poetry and is the Director of the International Poetry Forum. *The Very Fall of the Sun* is his first novel.

PETER GLASSMAN* teaches English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He is the author of *Language and Being: Joseph Conrad and the Literature of Personality.*

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*An indispensable book for scholars and critics of literature"**

LEO BERSANI

A FUTURE FOR ASTYANAX
CHARACTER AND DESIRE IN LITERATURE

"Bersani is an original and careful thinker who does not give in to critical fads and terminologies. He assesses new critical trends with quiet mastery and applies them with pertinency to the analysis of literary text... His is a valuable, in fact, indispensable book for scholars and critics of literature."—*Germaine Bree

"His illuminating book claims new ground for the critic."
—Peter Brooks, Yale University

$15.00

The first collection of essays on the author of V, The Crying of Lot 49, *and* Gravity's Rainbow

MINDFUL PLEASURES
ESSAYS ON THOMAS PYNCHON
Edited by George Levine and David Leverenz

Although Thomas Pynchon has won universal recognition as a major force in contemporary American literature, much mystery surrounds the novelist himself, and argument rages over his works. *Mindful Pleasures* unites the most telling insights of established critics such as Richard Poirier and Tony Tanner with those of younger writers. An indispensable resource to the growing throng of Pynchon readers. $9.95 cloth, $4.95 paper

At all bookstores
LITTLE, BROWN and COMPANY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POETS' PERSPECTIVE

Richard Eberhart
COLLECTED POEMS 1930–1976

A retrospective on a distinguished career, this volume offers the finest poems from one of America's most honored poets. "My guess is that posterity will enjoy the best of his poems as much as those written by any of his contemporaries."—Stanley Kunitz $15.00

Stevie Smith
COLLECTED POEMS

"A charming and original po wrote Robert Lowell, who enjoy "her unique and cheerfully g some voice." Now the work of highly individual Englishwoman been gathered in "a particul handsome collection of poetry an drawings."—*New York Times Book Review* $20.00

Seamus Heaney
NORTH

Inspired by events in Northern Ireland, Heaney has found a myth which allows him to articulate his vision of Ireland—its people, history, and landscape. "By far his best book."—*The Times Literary Supplement*. "Unmistakably the most important Irish poet since Yeats."—Conor Cruise O'Brien $5.95

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

200 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED